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A yellow bulldozer is shown from a low angle, positioned on a massive, sprawling pile of garbage at a landfill. The pile is composed of various types of waste, including plastic bags, cardboard boxes, and other debris. The bulldozer's blade is partially visible, pushing through the trash. The background shows a clear sky with some light clouds.

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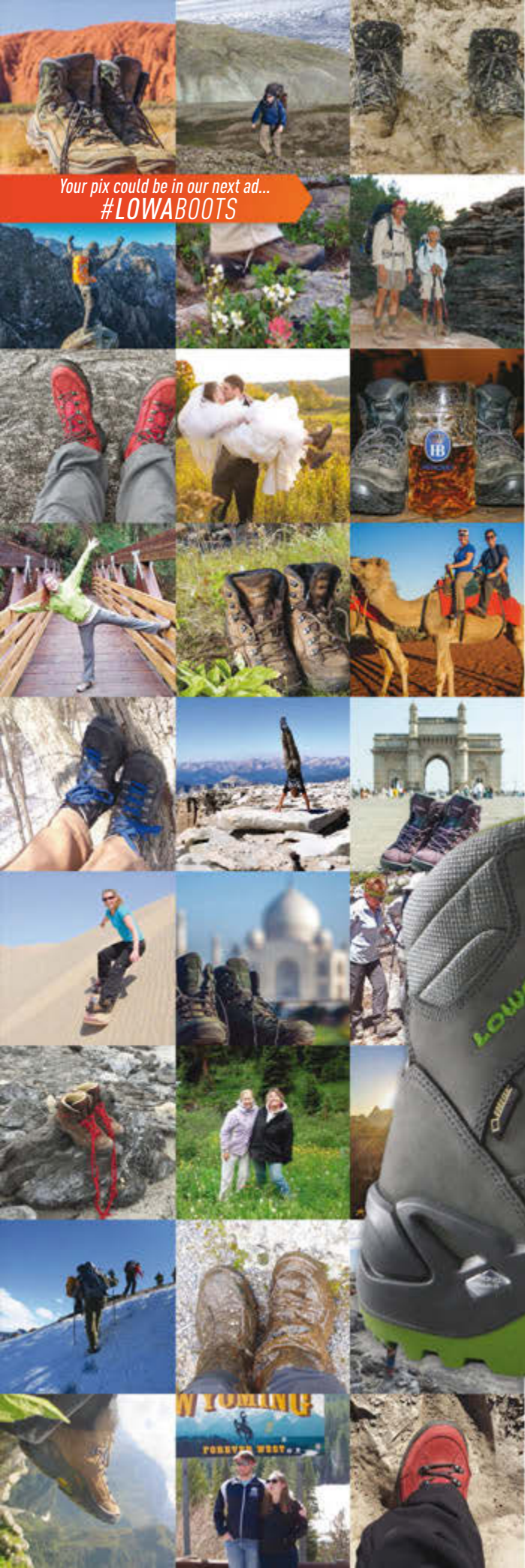
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BY MARK JENKINS

**Cover** Lower Robin Lake, WA, by Ber-green Photography. Beta: page 104.

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## IN GUIDE HE TRUSTS

Mike Libeck has been on over 60 expeditions with multiple first ascents in areas of Afghanistan, Antarctica, Baffin Island, Guyana, Greenland, China, Madagascar, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Venezuela, Yemen, Indonesia, Africa, and beyond—

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GUIDE TENNIE | MID

with **STEALTH** 



# BACKPACKER

THE OUTDOORS AT YOUR DOORSTEP

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**STAFF PICKS** Your favorite backcountry lake? (See more starting on page 68.)

Kalmia Lake,  
Trinity Alps  
Wilderness, CA

Lake Helene, Rocky  
Mountain National Park

Moccasin Lake, Eagle  
Cap Wilderness, OR

Benson Lake, Yosemite  
National Park

Chasm Lake, Rocky  
Mountain National  
Park

Lake  
Superior, at  
the Apostle  
Islands, WI

Como Lake,  
Blanca Peak,  
Sangre de  
Cristos, CO

Lake Dinosaur, CO

Lake Catherine,  
Ansel Adams  
Wilderness, CA

Eno River Quarry, Eno  
River State Park, NC

Go to backpacker.com/fieldscouts for their weekly reports.

Dollar Lake on  
Mt. Hood, OR

Unnamed lake  
halfway across  
Jasper National  
Park's North  
Boundary Trail

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# editor's note

BY DENNIS LEWON



Madison and Aidan prep for a waterfall hike in Ecuador.

## Coming to a Park Near You

Meet our Centennial team—and look for them on the trail.

**I** **IS THIS A HOAX? THAT WAS** the reaction from a number of readers when I announced “The Best Job Ever” in our March issue, and described our search for a team to explore the national parks in honor of the upcoming Centennial. I understood the skepticism. When something sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Not this time. For its 100th birthday, the National Park Service deserves more than a card. That’s why we’ve launched a yearlong celebration that includes a countdown of the top 100 reasons we love the national parks (page 63). And it’s why we’ve partnered with Subaru to send a Centennial team into the parks, starting this month. Subaru, a longtime partner of BACKPACKER’s Get out More and Leave No Trace campaigns, shares our commitment to the parks. In fact, the company is using its experience as a zero-landfill manufacturer to

help the park service eliminate trash in Yosemite, Grand Teton, and Denali National Parks (see page 67).

So who got the gig? More than 9,000 people responded to our job posting, and narrowing the field was no easy task. But this month, Madison Perrins and Aidan Lynn Klimenko will start getting some serious use out of their America the Beautiful all-access parks pass (read why you should get your own on page 67). The pair honed their trail chops in Montana, where they earned degrees in film and photography from Montana State University, and most recently spent six months adventuring—and storytelling—from the Western U.S. to South America. You could say they’ve been in training without knowing it.

For the next year, they’ll be visiting national parks, finding the best trips and tips, and sharing the stories of people like you. Stop them on the trail, then look for their photos, videos, and field reports on all of our social media channels and at [backpacker.com/nps100](http://backpacker.com/nps100). We’re confident they’ll provide plenty of proof that this job is for real.

### YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

Get the latest issue of BACKPACKER on your iPhone. Our new mobile edition has been designed to fit in the palm of your hand—so you can really check out in the checkout aisle. Just search for “Backpacker magazine” in the Apple App Store.

### CAMPFIRE POETRY

When Associate Editor Maren Horjus suggested mosquito-inspired haikus for The Play List, I had, um, misgivings. But anyone who has been buzzed by swarming skeeters will be tempted to join the fun. Here’s my contribution. See the rest on page 34.

All life is sacred  
Deer run, trout swim, eagle fly  
Die, mosquito, die

## Join the Team

Never been to a national park? You could win a trip—on us!—and help contribute to our yearlong Centennial celebration. We’re taking park first-timers for a hike in one of the country’s premier national parks this summer, and we’ll share their stories in an upcoming issue. Get details and apply at [backpacker.com/nps100](http://backpacker.com/nps100).



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# #trailchat

YOUR OPINIONS, PHOTOS, AND FEATS

## Overheard

Buddy Backpacker has defied plenty of skeptics (“Kindergarten Can Wait,” May 2015), but found widespread support among our readers. His thru-hikes are “something to be celebrated, not frowned upon,” says [Valerie Bloomberg](#). “As long as he’s having fun and isn’t pushed too hard, there’s no harm in it,” says [Jennifer Strom Rao](#), adding that “he seems in better shape than his folks.” [Christl Findling](#) put it more bluntly: “I want [Andrea and Dion] to adopt me.” The sole critique? Buddy’s donut-hole-and-Pringles diet. “That’s the only part that raised eyebrows for me,” says [Jerami Martin](#). Nutritious or not, that sounds like pretty typical thru-hiker fare to us.



MATTHEW KINNEY PLANS TO TAKE HIS SOON-TO-BE 13-MONTH-OLD SON ON THE TAHOE RIM TRAIL THIS SUMMER AND SUMS IT UP BEST:

“THE TRAIL TEACHES MANY THINGS THAT CANNOT BE LEARNED IN SCHOOL.”

## Smackdown of the Month: Drones in National Parks

In April, a park ranger in Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park used a stun gun to subdue a 35-year-old man who refused to stop flying his recreational drone above the Kilauea caldera. (Drones are banned in all 407 NPS units.) We asked readers: Did the punishment fit the crime?



### YOUR VOTES



58%



42%

### YES

“Drones are banned because of incidents like the one in Yellowstone where the pilot dropped the drone in the middle of a geyser. Others [in Zion National Park, for example] have chased wildlife . . . Hopefully they seized his drone as well.” —Charlie O’Neal

“He was near the edge of an active volcano and ignored law enforcement requests. For his own safety and the preservation of the park, he got what he deserved.”

—Donny Hornsby

### NO

“Give him a fine, but don’t try to cause him bodily harm.” —Paula Smith

“The drone flier was in the wrong, but law enforcement tends to escalate kind of quickly. Assaulting him physically was excessive.” —Marc Arndt

## Trending

### How To Do Everything

Brush up on key trail skills and learn new tricks this month on our social media channels.



See rankings of the most common hiking mistakes, essential first-aid tips, and best outdoor education classes to take. Plus: Read expert Q&A’s on wildlife spotting, water treatments, and more.



Got a nifty backcountry hack? Show us in 15 seconds or less for a chance to win sweet gear! Tag your video @backpackermag and use #BPHacks.



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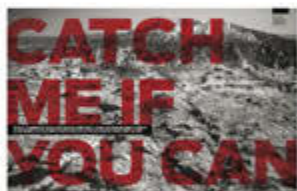


## #trailchat

### Overheard

"Thank you for inspiring me to backpack the Bell Mountain Wilderness ["The Go List," March 2015]," writes **Dennis Menard**. "My brother-in-law and I hiked 6 additional miles on the Ozark Trail and camped on a perfect craggy ledge before descending counterclockwise to Joes Creek to complete the loop. The phrase that clinched the deal was 'DO IT,' and that we did."

**Michael Stubbs** and **Cheryl Sitton** loved our attempt to retrace Hoskinini's steps ("Catch Me If You Can," May 2015), but the design treatment left others seeing red. "With all the red letters over the first part of the story, I gave up trying to read it," says **Rachel Burnage**. "Some of your readers are over 60 and still climb mountains, but our eyesight isn't so great anymore!" Sorry Rachel, we didn't mean to scare you off. Give it another shot online at [backpacker.com/hoskinini](http://backpacker.com/hoskinini).



Got a comment or trail photo to share? Send feedback to [letters@backpacker.com](mailto:letters@backpacker.com).

### Heatbuster Hikes

Dog days getting you down? Cool off with these refreshing trail recommendations from our Facebook fans.

**"The 14-mile round trip to 11,043-foot Telescope Peak in Death Valley. It's 113°F in the valley and about 70°F at the top."**

—Joe Mourgos

**"Two hours into an August hike on Utah's Highline Trail, it snowed for a couple minutes. Back home in Kansas City, the temp was near 100°F."** —Shawn Petree

**"The Bighorn Mountains in north-central Wyoming can't be beat for beauty or cooler temps."** —Kelli Wages Schulenberg

**"Perfect time to head into the Cascades. Jefferson Park, Three Sisters Wilderness, and Goat Rocks Wilderness are my favorites. All of them stay cool in the summer with majestic forests and alpine trails."** —LaDonna Grenz

**"The Appalachian Trail starting from Camp Mohican in Blairstown, New Jersey. Hike to the fire tower, have lunch with a gorgeous view, then hike back on the Rattlesnake Swamp Trail to Catfish Pond for a refreshing swim."**

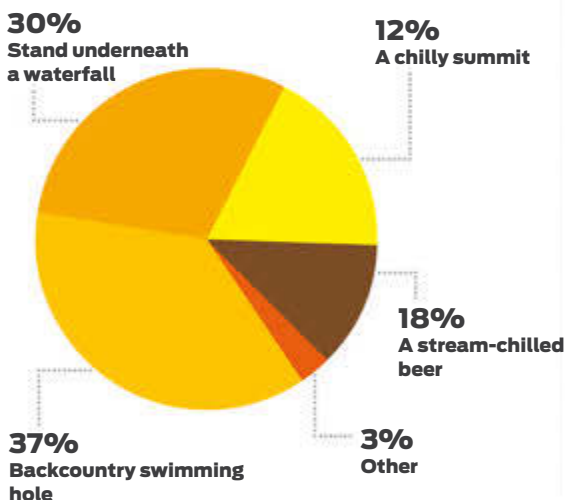
—Leslie McGlynn

**"Mt. Washington, New Hampshire. The record high temperature is 72°F and it's usually even cooler in July and August."**

—Tom McCormick

### The Big Question

You're out on a scorching hike when a genie appears and grants you one wish for cooling off. What do you wish for?



### Instagram



**Spectacular spigot** **@kkruchin** nabbed this shot at Ponytail Falls in Oregon's Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. "I was browsing pictures from Oregon and got so inspired that I jumped in the car and drove 12 hours each way from San Francisco for a hike around the falls. Definitely worth it."

## Nepal (Still) Needs Help

The powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake that devastated Nepal on April 25, killing thousands and leaving nearly 250,000 others homeless, has long since faded from the 24-hour news cycle. But backpackers have a reason to remember the Himalayan kingdom: Either you've hiked there or dreamed of going. Recovery efforts will take months, especially in the remote mountain villages favored by trekkers.

### Where should I donate?

#### American Himalayan Foundation

The AHF set up a dedicated earthquake relief fund to provide food, water, and healthcare to those affected. **Contact** [himalayan-foundation.org](http://himalayan-foundation.org)

#### MercyCorps

This global relief organization already has local supply chains in place, allowing goods to reach the needy faster. With a boost from REI, the group had already raised \$820,000 at press time for on-the-ground aid. **Contact** [mercycorps.org](http://mercycorps.org)

### Langtang

The popular trekking village of Langtang was all but obliterated after a second quake struck the region in May. Electricity and communications remain intermittent, and several major roads are impassible.

### Mt. Everest

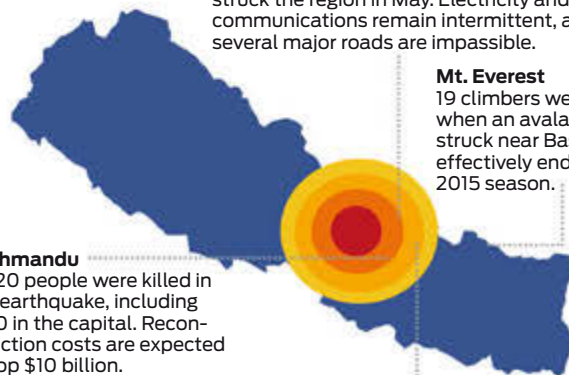
19 climbers were killed when an avalanche struck near Base Camp, effectively ending the 2015 season.

### Kathmandu

8,620 people were killed in the earthquake, including 1,130 in the capital. Reconstruction costs are expected to top \$10 billion.

### Sindhupalchok District

The quake destroyed 80 percent of the 60,000 buildings in this Himalayan foothills region, which includes Langtang National Park.





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016

08.2015

# the play list

This month's top  
trips and picks

PHOTO BY CHRIS BURKARD/MASSIF





1

**Walk the line.**  
**Kananaskis Country, Alberta**

Banff may get all the attention, but its outskirts get fewer visitors, and you can't beat the instant gratification. A steep 2-mile trek will land you below the hulking headwall of 9,705-foot Mt. Kidd. Follow the Kovach Trail from Kananaskis (25 miles south-east of Banff), gaining 2,000 feet to this grassy ridge. Photographer Chris Burkard suggests visiting in August for perfect temps in the 70s or September when the larches turn and paint the slopes gold. **Contact** [albertaparks.ca](http://albertaparks.ca)



2

THE EXPERIENCE

## Outside the lines: **Off-Trail Hiking**

**Discover another side of the wilderness—and maybe yourself—on a cross-country trek.**

**BY PETER FRICK-WRIGHT**

W

We're all grit and guts in the West Yellowstone backcountry office, playing up our preparedness for the increasingly skeptical ranger in charge of issuing our trip permit.

"You have a GPS?"

"We have maps and a compass."

"Who approved this itinerary?"

"I've been emailing with this office for two years."

I have no gripe with his questions. We're asking permission to spend 10 days hiking border-to-border—west to east—across the park, and to do most of it off-trail, where travel happens slowly and trouble happens quickly.

"We don't usually permit trips like this. I need to make a phone call."

When my friend Travis first proposed this trek two years ago, he sold me on the idea that there's an entire undiscovered layer of wilderness to be found off-trail. Just as car-camping tourists discover a new side of Yellowstone when they leave the pavement and go for a hike, we would go one level deeper by leaving the trails. If trails are ideas imposed on the wilderness, this was our chance to think outside the box. I signed on, and a few months later, mentioned the trip to my German brother-in-law, Fabian. He said, "Pete, I go anywhere. You tell me what to bring."

We tried to go in 2013 but the government shutdown derailed our plans. But now, in August 2014, if the ranger's phone call goes well, it'll

launch 10 days of exploring the unknown. And here he comes now.

"The permits check out. You're good to go."

Then he gives us a look that adds: But this is a bad idea.

We embark the next day, bearing east into the woods, wending through sunny green forest, tracing contour lines on the map, semi-drunk on our rapid progress. We're crossing on a southerly route, slaloming between Shoshone, Heart, and Yellowstone Lakes. It's a route that avoids most of the park's major attractions (that's where the trails are) in favor of meadows far from parking turnouts and forests that haven't yet been photographed and shared online. Yellowstone gets more than 3 million visitors a year and almost nobody goes this deep into the park.

PHOTOS BY (FROM LEFT) MICHAEL DEYOUNG /  
TANDEM STOCK; ISTOCKPHOTO  
.COM / CLUMPNER





When traveling off-trail,  
the path is where you  
make it.

The oft-repeated reasons to hike off-trail have to do with solitude and stillness: You see less of the big-ticket stuff and notice more of the details. And you do. But solitude never felt this electric. Every step out here grants some uncharted thrill of terra incognita. When we stop in a patch of forest clover and the map and compass reveal that we're exactly on course, it feels preordained. Where else would we be?

The feeling lasts two days.

The third morning, we run out of lush, welcoming, stroll-through-fairyland forest and enter post-wildfire, screw-you-and-your-timetable new-growth pine. Dense, springy branches thwap our faces; we curse at them just to return the insult.

Even when the pines thin out, waist-high piles of deadfall logs have us crawling up and over and

down, up and over and down like load-bearing ants navigating a spilled box of spaghetti. We routinely travel 50 yards without touching the ground; tracking our progress on the map finds us on the slow side of 1 mph.

The physical toll is remarkable. While on-trail effort can be grinding, a day of off-trail scrambling with a heavy pack leaves your body feeling like it's been processed by the forest's digestive system. Fabian is being German about it, but I'm hurting to the point that I can barely cook dinner.

Maybe this is a bad idea, as the ranger intimated.

Well, yes. But what choice do we have now?

Six days in, we break for sandwiches on the shores of Yellowstone Lake. Our eventual camp is visible just a mile across the water, but will require 8 trail miles of hiking. We'd cut across if it weren't for this lake, we say, chewing slowly to keep lunch from ending.

Then someone tosses a log into the water as a joke. It floats really well. We lash a couple of 15-foot logs together. They hold our weight.

Where does it say we must go off-trail on-foot?

Soon, we're waterproofing our packs to protect from errant splashes and paddling for the horizon on a Huck Finn raft. But just as we're on the cusp of real progress, the sky begins to darken. A storm drops over the ridge and blows us straight back to shore. The four-hour effort saves us exactly 400 yards of hiking. Still, it feels like a breakthrough—the light bulb moment following a week of failed efforts.

As we go forward, we find we're more open to new navigational ideas and better at picking our way through the landscape. We're more feral and savvy, reading the terrain to see if ridgelines curve back onto our compass bearing and massaging our course based on wind direction, hoping to see an elk or moose or black bear before it smells us. We never do, but it constantly feels like we could.

Subtle paths and game trails reveal themselves in the undergrowth where none did before. It's like we're hiking to some new off-trail rhythm we hadn't been able to hear.

Our exit from the park goes up a valley to the saddle between two peaks, where we camp and prep our last day's hike, down a ridge. But when it comes time to leave, Travis suggests that we climb one of the peaks instead. We'll lounge around all day in the sun, he says, then come back and camp in the same spot two days in a row.

Fabian and I hesitate, because now that we're able to move more easily, staying put feels truly radical. But soon we're on a grassy plain at the summit, with nothing to do but sit in the sun and look back at a hundred miles of a national park that now feels like intimately familiar terrain.

We wander around, taking in views off different sides of the peak, exchanging looks that all say the same thing: What a great idea.

FIRST  
TRACKS  
3

See the  
Adirondacks  
as an oriole would.

Take the kiddos and “hike” on the new Wild Walk, an elevated boardwalk through the treetops. Opening July 4, the Wild Walk traverses a quarter-mile via a four-story tree house and swinging bridges to a human-size spider web and bald eagle's nest. **Info** \$20 admission; [wildcenter.org](http://wildcenter.org)



No.4

Call yourself Ishmael.

→ We like Channel Islands National Park any time of year, but we love it in summer, when migratory humpback and blue whales pass through the Santa Cruz Channel. Bring binocs and hike 6.8 miles south from Water Canyon (overnight option here) to East Point for the best viewing. **Contact** [nps.gov/chis](http://nps.gov/chis)



5

**Relax by the pool.**  
**Mt. Baker-**  
**Snoqualmie NF, WA**

Infinity pools have nothing on this backcountry spa beside Jade Lake—about 11 miles in from the Hayes Lake/Cathedral Rock trailhead. We have a feeling photographer Jeff Carlson's image—and the cold dunk it promises (the "spa" isn't heated)—will make those miles fly under your feet. Two campsites are first-come, first-serve. Contact [fs.usda.gov/mbs](https://fs.usda.gov/mbs)





## No. 6

### **Try the water ice. Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, OR**

By early July, only a remnant of winter remains on Lost Lake, providing a rare chance to walk the line where the seasons meet. For photographer Ben Herndon, hiking 3.2 miles and gaining 2,000 feet on the East Lostine River Trail (#1662) was the easy part. Convincing his wife, Bekah, to walk out on the ice for this shot? Not so much. Note: Northwest Forest Passes are required at Two Pan trailhead. Contact [fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman](https://fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman)



▶ Wooden signs add to the charm of the Mountain Lakes Trail, also known as Heiko's Trail, after its primary creator.  
▼ Hikers stop to snap photos of the glacial cirque midway through the trek.



## Discover the Other Rockies

Traverse lush rainforests and high glacial cirques on bridges, ropes, and ladders on this new path in British Columbia.

BY MAREN HORJUS

→ **I WAS WRONG** about the Canadian Rockies. I know it as I climb through a verdant gorge, but I don't admit it until I emerge at the foot of a headwall in an alpine meadow that's covered with flowering white bistort so dense it looks like snow. Chalky spires jut skyward, splintering sunbeams that set the cirque aglow. Down valley, rows of pinnacled peaks stretch to the horizon.

I'm somewhere between 8,221-foot Mt. Hosmer and 7,251-foot Mt. Fernie on the new Mountain Lakes Trail in the southeastern

corner of British Columbia. My closest friends made this path the centerpiece of our annual girls' reunion trip because its creators, eccentric Fernie local Heiko Socher and his band, left clever detailing, like rope bridges and cutesy signs, throughout the trail. While my friends had no qualms about traveling all the way here from San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston, I felt a little dispirited. Like many Coloradans, I assumed the Canadian Rockies were just an extension of my home range. Visiting them on an easy, 14-mile path didn't seem foreign or exciting.

The scenery, however, quickly eclipsed my preconceptions. We headed out from Hartley Lake, climbing through a forested gorge via wobbly ladders, skinny bridges, and exposed singletrack. Shoulder-high ferns blocked the trail in spots (signed "Shady Lane"), and a creek locally known as Jumping Waters squirted through crumbling limestone like a fountain ("Watergate"). We ate lunch in house-size Bisaro Cave and then cooled our feet in eight-tiered Jumping Water Falls.

When we reach the glacial cirque ("Vict. Ave."), we stop to gape at the 8,000-footers. What they lack in elevation, they make up for in grandeur: The Canadian Rockies are starker, sharper, and more dramatic than the Rockies I'm familiar with back home. And,

because they're less developed than the American Rockies, the Canadian Rockies host a healthy grizzly population estimated at 25,000 (compared to just 1,500 in the Lower 48). So we belt boy band anthems to avoid any surprise encounters with bruins as we duck back below timberline at dusk, finally pulling off the trail to spend the night on the shoulder of Mt. Fernie. We stay up late catching up and drinking wine and fall asleep in a meadow so plush we don't need pads.

When the morning sun illuminates our campsite, it reveals slopes of red paintbrush and pink fireweed. Striated Mt. Fernie looms over the hanging valley. We could trek the final 5 miles over the last pass and down to Island Lake, but instead we decide to spend the day lounging in our idyllic campsite. There are few surprises in life. We intend to savor this one.

**DO IT** Fly into Calgary and drive south to Fernie (AB-2 is faster, but taking the Trans Canada and Kootenay Highways takes you through Banff and Kootenay National Parks). Leave a car at the Island Lake Lodge in southern Fernie and start at the northern terminus (49.609375, -115.059299) by Hartley Lake. (There is no commercial shuttle, but inquire at [fernietrailsalliance.com](http://fernietrailsalliance.com).) **Season** July through September **Permits** None **Contact** [tourismfernie.com](http://tourismfernie.com)



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INSIDER'S

8

GUIDE

## Mountain Escape **North Cascades National Park, Washington**

This remote park saves its best for hikers willing to tackle long miles and steep climbs. The reward for such commitment: lonely alpine lakes, colossal peaks frosted with glaciers, far-flung valleys hiding bears and wolverines, and some of the best mountain views in the Lower 48. Some things just shouldn't be rushed.

BY ELISABETH KWAK-HEFFERAN

PHOTOS BY (FROM LEFT) ALAN MAJCHROWICZ; ANDY PORTER;  
ISTOCKPHOTO.COM (2)



See 8,876-foot Eldorado Peak from the heather-lined Hidden Lake Trail.  
For long-range views of Ross Lake, hike the Lightning Creek Trail.



### The insider

The North Cascades are Katie Roloson's backyard—literally (in-park lodging is a perk of her job as manager of educational programs at the nonprofit North Cascades Institute). In her eight years on the job, she's made it a goal to climb all the peaks she can see from her house—she's down to the last three.

### Best backcountry campsite

The shelf cradling Tapto Lakes sits in an off-trail camping zone just under 7,174-foot Red Face Mountain, with tent-door views of hulking, 7,574-foot Whatcom Peak and other forbidding Picket Range summits. And because the two teacup lakes don't show up as a campsite on the National Geographic Trails Illustrated park map, expect to have them to yourself, Roloson says. Best approach: a five-day, 47-mile loop from the Hannegan Pass trailhead. Hike 12 miles on the Hannegan Pass and Chilliwack Trails (spend night one at Copper Creek), then continue 5.2 miles on Brush Creek Trail to Whatcom Pass. Take the obvious spur trail about a mile north from the pass to reach the lakes. To return, backtrack on Brush Creek Trail and swing north on Chilliwack Trail, then west on Copper Ridge Trail for nonstop views of huge peaks and hanging glaciers (primo campsites: Copper Lake and Egg Lake).

### Secret waterfall

A booming, 30-foot cascade tumbles just a quarter-mile southwest of the Big Beaver backcountry campsite—but for 10 months of the year, you'd never know it. High water in the dammed Ross Lake covers the waterfall until spring, when engineers draw down the lake and the gusher reemerges for its big annual show. "The lower falls are really impressive from mid-March to

mid-April, and there are often otters, loons, and peregrine falcons in the area," Roloson says. You could hike there (6 miles from the Ross Dam trailhead), but Roloson favors putting in a canoe at the Colonial Creek launch. Paddle 4 miles to the park service dock on Haul Road and portage a mile to Ross Lake (canoe wheels help), then paddle another 5 miles to Big Beaver.

### Trail gourmet

The charming town of Stehekin (population 112), which sits on Lake Chelan in the park's southeast corner, offers hikers the chance to refuel on farm-fresh goat cheese from roadside stands, steaks at Stehekin Valley Ranch, and "anything they make" at the Stehekin Pastry Company, Roloson says. You can take a boat or float plane in, but Roloson's favorite way to visit is to stop off midway through a five- or six-day, 58-mile shuttle backpacking trip from Cascade Pass to Thunder Creek trailhead. (Ride the \$7 park shuttle 11 miles to Stehekin from High Bridge Campground and back.)

### Beginner mountaineering

"Easy" is a relative term in the North Cascades, where vertical topography and summit glaciers are standard (it's the most heavily glaciated park in the Lower 48). But 7,182-foot Pyramid Peak is a great training ground for practicing snowfield skills, Roloson says. "You do cross steep remnants of the Colonial Glacier, but it's mellow, without any crazy crevasses," she says. Pack crampons and an ice axe and target June or July for the 5-mile push from the Pyramid Lake Trail up an obvious (but unsigned) climber's trail that leads from the south side of the lake up the peak's northeastern ridge. Navigation and self-arrest skills are a must; overnight at one of the established campsites on the rocky north ridge leading to Pyramid Peak (free permit required).

### Best wildlife-watching

The park's remote valleys host plenty of charismatic megafauna like black bears, moose, wolverines, cougars, lynx, bobcats, and the rare wolf. But for the most, er, singular wildlife-watching experience, head to Willow Lake, just north of Ross Lake. "It's Sasquatch central—at least, that's what I've heard," Roloson says. Rumors of giant footprints and an eerie feeling of being watched swirl around the marshy lake. Grab the campsite on the lake's west side and keep your camera at the ready: The area is prime habitat for moose, coyotes, and gray wolves, just in case Bigfoot misses his appointment.

## No. 9



### Fake it 'til you make it.

→ So what if you didn't hike the Pacific Crest Trail this year. Or the year before. Or the year before that. You can still

get a taste by attending the ninth annual PCT Days this August 28 to 30 in Cascade Locks, Oregon. Check out the latest gear from exhibitors, take free classes, enter raffles, and camp on Thunder Island. Then, hike your own hike. [Contactpctdays.com](http://Contactpctdays.com)



**No. 10 Behold the cosmos. Schedule a backcountry overnight for July 1 or August 12. On the former date, see Venus and Jupiter in conjunction (less than a degree away from each other) to the west just after sunset. On the latter, take in the annual Perseids meteor shower, which fires up to 60 shooting stars per hour.**

## IN THE CLUB

# 11

**...in which we honor the best hiking clubs in the country.**

→ Some hiking clubs impress us based on number of participants. Others because of how often they get out. And then there's the

Hearthstone Hikers ([forsythco.com](http://forsythco.com)). The club didn't catch our eye with size or frequency (40 members explore Georgia on twice-monthly dayhikes ranging from 2 to 10 miles). But consider this: The hikers range in age from 60 to 92. Crushing it.

Think your trail club deserves a callout? Write to [intheclub@backpacker.com](mailto:intheclub@backpacker.com) to tell us why.



DONE IN A DAY

12

## Tunnel Treks

Explore the mountains from the inside out in these always-chilly, sometimes-spooky spots. Bring a headlamp. BY ARIELLE PARRIS

### Wolf Creek Trestle, Tillamook State Forest

OREGON

The Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad once spanned 88 miles and 60 trestles, but it never saw the profit its builders intended. Now, you can profit from their folly: This 10-mile out-and-back follows a section of failed railroad that includes tracks, trestles, and two eerie tunnels (open to the public).

See nature's reclamation for yourself when you traverse moss-covered concrete, storm-mangled rails, and tracks that have trees growing straight through them. Begin on the jeep track at Pennoyer Creek before heading northwest onto the tracks (they're not active). Soon after the first tunnel (mile 1.8), you'll hit a 165-foot-high trestle (take a look down past the steel girders to Baldwin Creek, a tributary of the Salmonberry River). Continue southwest into Tunnel 27, a dark, dank corridor prime for exploring, at mile 4. The trail dead-ends at mile 5; retrace your steps. **Contact** [bit.do/TillamookStateForest](http://bit.do/TillamookStateForest)



### ALSO ON OUR LIST

Tunnel Falls, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Oregon: Follow a skinny path blasted into the basalt cliff behind the 130-foot cascade on this 12-mile out-and-back on the Eagle Creek Trail.

### Deserted Pennsylvania Turnpike, Breezewood

PENNSYLVANIA

Part of America's first superhighway, this piece of I-70 was abandoned in the 1960s when the two-lane tunnels created miles of traffic. Today it's a creepy reminder

of an era past: Each tunnel has equipment rooms and offices still holding old relics (peek inside the rooms, but don't go in). Urban explorers will like the elaborate graffiti. From the parking lot at U.S. 30 and Tannery Road, head east along the abandoned road to kick off this out-and-back (up to 7.3 miles

each way). Reach the .7-mile-long Rays Hill Tunnel at mile 1 and the 1.3-mile-long Sideling Hill Tunnel at mile 6. Be sure to kill your light for a bit: It's so dark you won't be able to see your own hand, and the only noise is the staccato beat of dripping water. Turn around after Sideling. **Contact** [grouseland.com](http://grouseland.com)

### Bennett Spring Natural Tunnel, Bennett Spring State Park

MISSOURI

We love the juxtaposition of man and nature on these tunnel treks, but sometimes the earth is her own best architect: A 296-foot-long natural tunnel,

Bennett Spring is an impressive example of geology in action. It's more than 15 feet high and 50 feet wide, thanks to Bennett Spring, which once raged through (now it's just a mellow stream). Walk through the tunnel on a 7.5-mile loop from the Bennett Spring trailhead. Heading southeast on the blue-blazed

path, reach S-shaped Bennett Spring Tunnel at the midway point. Hop across rocks in the drippy passage before linking back up with the trail on the other side. (Hot weather bonus: The dolomite passage is generally 15 degrees cooler than above ground.) **Contact** [bit.do/BennettSpringStatePark](http://bit.do/BennettSpringStatePark)





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**End your day perfectly.**  
**Pictured Rocks National**  
**Lakeshore, MI**

Looking at this shot, you might think Miners Beach on Lake Superior has gold running through its shores. Photographer Stephen Matera thought the same thing when the setting sun struck the edges of sedimentary shoreline beneath Miners Beach Falls, illuminating each layer just so. Best part? The falls reside at the western end of a 1-mile, white-sand beach walk. Maybe there's no ore here, but the place sure has its riches. **Contact** [nps.gov/piro](https://nps.gov/piro)







No. 14

### It's berry season!

→ For tips on foraging and some tasty backcountry recipes, check out [backpacker.com/berries](http://backpacker.com/berries).



No. 15

Quality canned beer is the best thing to happen to backpacking since scotch. Three more regional favorites are now available in aluminum. Phew.

CENTRAL PICK



### Buffalo Bayou More Cowbell

9% ABV  
(buffbrew.com)

WESTERN PICK



### Anchor IPA

6.5% ABV (anchorbrewing.com)

EASTERN PICK



### Flying Fish Farmhouse Summer Ale

4.9% ABV  
(flyingfish.com)

WEEKENDS

16

1 of 3

## Easy-access alpine zone

Fishlake National Forest, Utah



The Tushars are Utah's second-highest range after the Uintas. Delano Peak (the highest point on the left) is the tallest.



#### Trip stats

Distance: 8.7 miles or 10.7 (with Delano)  
Time: 2 days  
Difficulty: ★★★★★ or ★★★★★ (with Delano)

With shoes stained red from the blistering hot sandstone desert below, I stand, shivering, on a high-altitude ridge that plunges like a dragon's tail from a glacier-carved summit. I scampered up this evergreen-hemmed cluster of 12,000-foot peaks from southwestern Utah's desert. But there is nothing "Southwest" about the Tushar Mountains. A herd of shaggy-haired mountain goats laze on the rocky crown to the southeast, while wildflowers paint the slope to the east brilliant scarlet. I love the desert, but in August, it's hard to beat escaping to the sky.

BY DREW ALLRED



**Turn-by-turn**  
From Bullion Pasture trailhead

- 1 Take the **Bullion Pasture Trail (74)** 1.3 miles south to a fork.
- 2 Follow the **South Fork Trail (72)** to the Delano Peak campsites at mile 3.4. (Trail-side raspberry patches fruit in August.)
- 3 Optional: Head up the Delano

Peak Trail (see "Bag a peak" below).

- 4 Pick up the **Pocket Trail (216)** and walk 2 miles north to a junction.

- 5 Veer west onto the **Bullion Pasture Trail (74)** and loop 2.1 miles to the trailhead.



**Campsite**  
Delano Peak (mile 3.4)

Set up a roomy basecamp in the

pinces beneath Delano Peak's eastern flank (off the South Fork Trail). The South Fork River flows nearby, and fire-red Tushar paintbrush blooms in early August. If the site is taken, find a different social site in the eastern basin.



**Bag a peak**

Grab a summit pack and climb 12,175-foot

Delano Peak on day two before the afternoon thunderstorms hit. Pick up the Delano Peak Trail and follow the southeast drainage a mile to the summit, the Tushars' high point. Get 360-degree views, including Marysville Basin (to the east) and 12,000-footers Mts. Belknap (north) and Holly (south). Mountain goats often congregate on Delano's southeastern slopes.



**Miner's cabin**

Find an abandoned miner's cabin just off the Pocket Trail near mile 3.9 on the itinerary

without Delano (mile 5.8 with Delano). This remote lodge, nestled deep among a trifecta of 11,000-foot peaks, dates back to the 1800s. It was likely deserted when the ore supply dried up. Don't venture inside the shaky dwelling.

**DO IT Trailhead** 38.403126, -112.397089; 23 miles south of Sevier off Beaver Creek Rd. **Season** July through September for snow-free trails **Permits** None **Custom map** bit.do/BPmapDelanoPeak (\$15) **Contact** fs.usda.gov/fishlake **Trip data** backpacker.com/DelanoPeak



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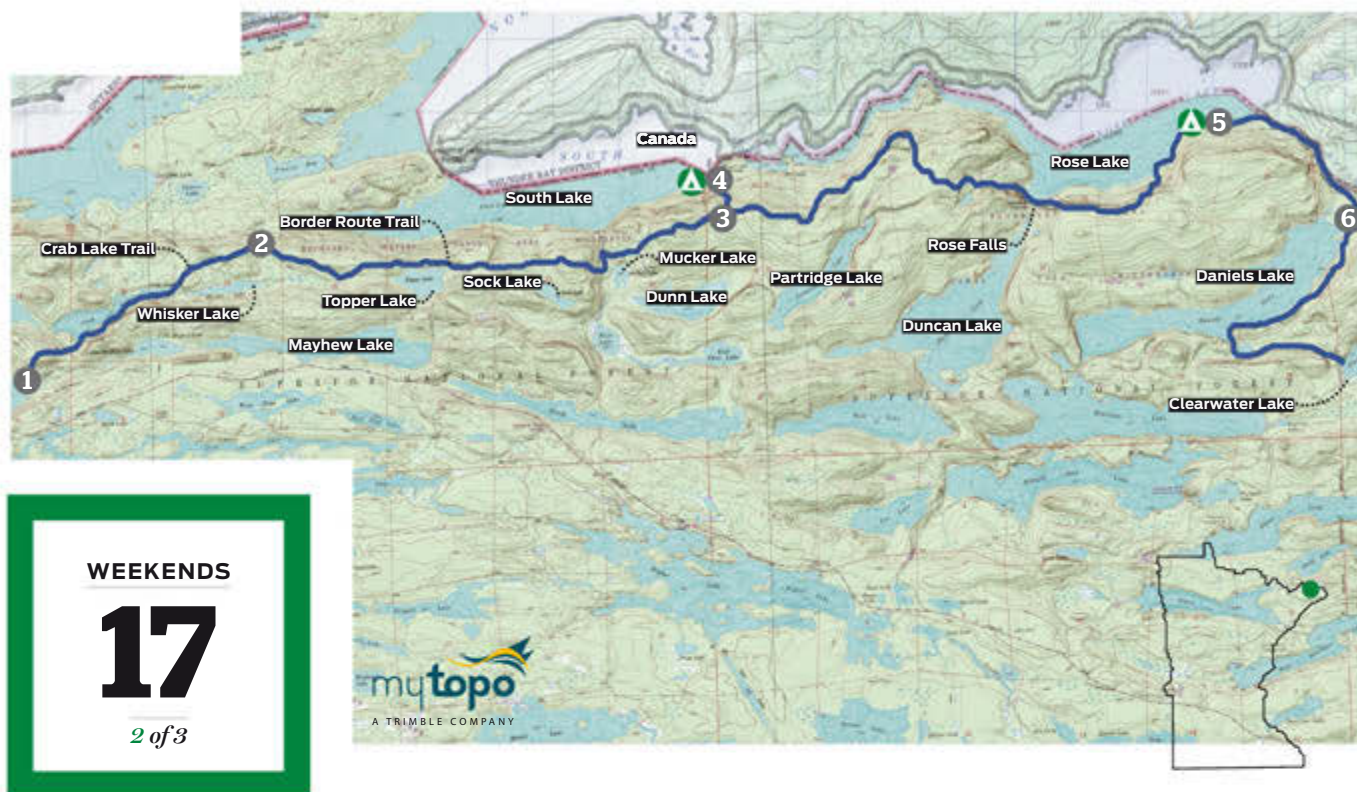
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WEEKENDS

17

2 of 3

## Boundary Waters by foot

Superior National Forest,  
Minnesota

Most people haul a canoe into the Boundary Waters, but I think they're doing it all wrong. After all, you can't traverse Boundary Waters' high cliffs and dense red pine woods while portaging a canoe. And when you ditch your boat, you can hike a weekend's worth of the 65-mile Border Route Trail, a secluded path that skirts congested portaging routes as it tours the area's wildest terrain, including waterfalls, bluffs, and virgin forests. And don't worry: You still get dozens of pristine, clear-water lakes.

BY JOSEPH FRIEDRICHS



**Turn-by-turn**  
From the Crab Lake trailhead

- 1 Follow the Crab Lake Trail 2.6 miles northeast to a junction.
- 2 Pick up the

**Border Route Trail (BRT)** and trek 5.2 miles east to a fork.

- 3 Take the spur .5 mile north to South Lake at mile 8.3.
- 4 Retrace your steps to the BRT

and proceed east to the Rose Lake campsite at mile 14.8.

- 5 Continue 1.7 miles southeast to a fork.
- 6 Turn south onto the Daniels Trail and take it 3.1 miles to the trail's end at Clearwater Lake.



**Campsite 1**  
South Lake  
(mile 8.3)

Bed down at this bayside site on the east end of South Lake. The dense white pines and poplars thin to the west, affording unobstructed views across the lake to the ridges and cliffs on the other side of the Canada border. Two tents fit in this designated site (first-come,

first-serve); if it's taken, continue wrapping clockwise around the lake to find another spot.



**Campsite 2**  
Rose Lake  
(mile 14.8)

Spend night two overlooking 1,315-acre Rose Lake (first-come, first-serve). There aren't trees at this spot, so take advantage of the open skies and scan for the aurora borealis (info below).



**Northern Lights**

You can see the green glow of the aurora borealis year-round in northeastern Minnesota, but your chances are best in fall and winter

(find a viewing schedule at [soft-servnews.com](http://soft-servnews.com)).



**Berries**

Thanks to 2007's Ham Lake Fire, berries now thrive in the recovering forest. Strawberries fruit in late June, and blue- and raspberries fruit in mid-July.



**Wolves**

Listen for Minnesota's elusive native timber wolf just after sunset. There are several packs in the area.

**DO IT Shuttle car** 48.071513, -90.383706; 32 miles north of Grand Marais off Clearwater Rd. Commercial option: Contact

Rockwood Lodge and Canoe Outfitters to inquire ([rockwoodbwca.com](http://rockwoodbwca.com)). **Trailhead** 48.074982, -90.649309; 16 miles west of the shuttle car parking lot off Loon Lake Rd. **Season** Summer for best temps and fall for foliage and fewer bugs **Permits** Required for overnighting (\$16 per person) **Custom map** [bit.do/BPmapBorderRouteTrail](http://bit.do/BPmapBorderRouteTrail) (\$15) **Contact** [bit.do/GunflintRangerStation](http://bit.do/GunflintRangerStation) **Trip data** [backpacker.com/BorderRouteTrail](http://backpacker.com/BorderRouteTrail)

### Trip stats

Distance:  
19.6 miles  
Time:  
3 days  
Difficulty:  
★★★★★





# NEW ZEALAND

Backpacker, Air New Zealand, & Tourism New Zealand teamed up for a once-in-a-lifetime trip: 10 days in New Zealand with trusted Backpacker ambassadors and a group of 16 outdoor enthusiasts hiking the Milford Track, testing (and keeping) amazing new gear, and sharing an experience of a lifetime with likeminded individuals.

"The Milford Track was one of the best hikes for us. Ultimate hikes and the staff made this one of the best trips of our lives. Queenstown was a wonderful place to hang out with great food and nice people, and views from the Hotel Mercure were awesome. Backpacker, thank you for making this a trip of a lifetime!" - Bill and Becky Ohland

#### Goal Zero Switch 10 Multi-tool Kit

"Durable, light, quick and reliable charging. Very easy to use and hang on pack." - Tim Ballweber

#### Granite Gear Leopard VC Pack

"The pack was comfortable, water resistant, and the compression straps held things together well."  
- Pam Brunelle

#### Icebreaker Apparel

"I loved all my Icebreaker apparel, but the Cool-Lite Spark SS Tee was my favorite - kept me cool when it was hot and humid, great color and fit!" - Angela Acerno

#### KEEN Durand Boots and UNEEK Sandals

"The boots provided excellent ankle support and cushioning. The sandals were so comfortable that I wore them after the hike each day - and in Queenstown!" - Robert "Brev" Moore

#### Mountain Hardwear Plasmic Ion Jacket

"Fit was perfect even with a thin jacket underneath and it was long enough that it didn't ride up while wearing a backpack." - Christine Kelliher

#### MSR Trekking Poles

"The poles exceeded my expectation on sandy trails, shallow rivers crossings, brushy trails, slick rocks, and steep scree fields." - Albert Brunelle

#### Sawyer Water Filter & First Aid

"I liked the pouch style water bottles and used them every day. The first aid kit is a handy little packet." - Peter Williams

#### Zamst Support Brace

"Very supportive and lots of adjustments to enable pressure where it should be." - Eric Williams

» Visit [backpacker.com/newzealand2015](http://backpacker.com/newzealand2015) for a recap of the trip

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No. 18 | Impress your friends.



→ The commoners call it a “dandelion.” But not you. You are a botanist (sort of), thanks to the Idaho Wildflowers app (\$8; [highcountryapps.com](http://highcountryapps.com)), and know it is *Taraxacum officinale*. Since July is unofficial wildflower month in the Inland Northwest, hit the trail and find some blooms. The new app can help you ID more than 800 wildflowers common to Washington, Oregon, Utah, Montana, and, of course, Idaho. You may curse *Taraxacum officinale* when it pops up in your lawn, but when it covers a hillside, it’s a sight to behold.

## 19 The National Park Service turns 99 on August 25. Celebrate with free entry into the national parks.

### No. 20

#### SUMMER BACKPACKING

always seems like a good idea—swimming holes, peakbagging, wild berries—until the skeeters attack. We asked 8,000 readers to pen haikus to tell us what they think about mosquitoes. Read our favorites below.



Outdoors in my veins  
Mosquitoes empty my veins  
Swat and spray in vain

– Jonathan Longshore

Busy bugs fly high  
Land on me and you will die  
Losing battle sigh

– Philip Tracy

Mosquitoes aren’t bad  
Their bites are just little pricks  
Horseflies however...

– Zach Johns



## Wild solitude

Otter Creek Wilderness,  
West Virginia



#### Trip stats

Distance:  
14.7 miles  
Time:  
2 days  
Difficulty:  
★★★★

The cool water of Otter Creek cascades over my bare legs, tickling my sore arches as it courses by the natural rock chair I’m sitting on. I climbed 4,432-foot Shavers Mountain this morning—midway through a 14.7-mile loop—and this watery respite is exactly what I need. After a quick rest, I’ll continue down the trail past thick layers of pink rhododendron and white mountain laurel to my riverside camp, where I’ll probably soak my feet all over again. BY RACHEL SAYERS



#### Turn-by-turn From the Mylius Trailhead

① Follow the Mylius Trail 1.5 miles northwest up the southern face of Shavers Mountain to a four-way junction.

② Turn northeast (hiker’s right) onto the Shavers Mountain Trail and continue 2.7 miles along the ridge to a fork.

③ Merge west (hiker’s left) onto the Green Mountain Trail and descend to Otter Creek at mile 8.1.

④ Make a hard left onto the Otter Creek Trail and follow the creek .9 mile south to camp.

⑤ Continue 3.4 miles south on the main path. (You will need to ford Otter up to five times; prepare for knee-deep water in August.)

⑥ Veer east (hiker’s left) onto the Mylius Trail and follow it 2.3 miles to your car.



#### Campsite Otter Creek (mile 9)

Set up camp on the banks of Otter for easy access to the creek’s abundant pools, chutes, and waterfalls. The site (first-come, first-serve) is big enough for two tents; another site .2 mile downriver allows for spillover. Nighttime bonus: Enjoy nature’s best white-noise machine.



#### Bear country

Otter Creek Wilderness hosts one of the state’s largest black bear populations, thanks both to its remoteness and substantial size. Keep an eye out as you pick your way along Otter Creek. (In summer, bears are most active at dusk and dawn.) For tips on bear safety, visit [backpacker.com/survival/bears](http://backpacker.com/survival/bears).



#### Find fungi

The rich humus of the Otter Creek basin, a byproduct of the area’s logging past, supports a wide variety of fungi. Look for tasty morels in spring, when the ground is wettest and temperatures are mild. Scan year-round for the spongy fungi near large, rotting trees. (Note: Never eat anything you can’t positively identify.)

#### DO IT Trail-

head 38.961411, -79.607663; 50 miles west of Petersburg off Sully Rd. **Season** Summer for blooming rhododendrons and warm temps (better for swimming); fall brings foliage; spring for other wildflowers **Permit** None **Custom map** [bit.do/BPmapOtterCreek](http://bit.do/BPmapOtterCreek) (\$15) **Contact** [bit.do/MonongahelaNF](http://bit.do/MonongahelaNF) **Trip data** [backpacker.com/OtterCreek](http://backpacker.com/OtterCreek)



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**Landon Mayer, Florissant, CO**



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**- ISABELLA BIRD**



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# Skills

## SUP the Backcountry

Join the standup paddleboard craze and enjoy an above-water vantage for everything from rising trout to streamside wildlife. Start with tips from former pro kayaker Ken Hoeve, who now develops boards for Jackson Kayak and competes on its whitewater and fishing SUP teams.

**1)** Wear a properly fitted PFD (always) and helmet on technical streams, and don't forget protective footwear—river bottoms and banks are usually rocky. **2)** Never attach a leash to your ankle. Attach it to a PFD with a quick release system so you can free yourself if the leash gets snagged. **3)** Use a wide, thick board—around 34 inches wide and 5 to 6 inches thick. The width adds stability while the thickness adds flotation and rigidity. **4)** Keep a wide stance—at least as wide as your shoulders—with your feet facing forward and slightly staggered. Bend your knees for balance. **5)** Start in calm, still water, practicing strokes and getting back on your board from the water. Then move to slow-moving flat water (class I). Get comfortable here before moving on to class II. **6)** Learn to paddle comfortably on both sides; practice stroking on your right and left and making a quick transition between the two in order to keep your paddle in the water, which helps stability. **7)** Always carry momentum across an eddy line. **8)** In fast-moving water, look downriver and plan moves ahead of time; paddle aggressively. **9)** When in doubt, walk around a rapid or hazard.



Load a SUP with overnight gear packed in a waterproof bag. Pictured here: Canada's Yukon River.



## cheat sheet

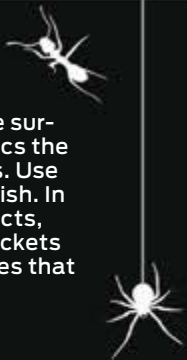
08.2015

# Fly Fishing

Need an excuse to spend all day exploring an idyllic mountain stream? Grab a rod and get hooked.

## WATCH FIRST.

- 1** If the trout are eating on the surface, use a dry fly that mimics the size and color of the insects. Use nymphs to go after deep-feeding fish. In small streams that lack flying insects, trout eat ants, beetles, spiders, crickets and other creepy crawlies. Cast flies that look like them.



## ADAPT TO THE FISH.

- 2** You might go after surface-feeding fish with the right fly and only catch small ones. Switch to a nymph to see if the bigger fish are lurking below.



4

## DON'T UNDERESTIMATE SMALL POOLS.

An adult trout can live in a desk-size pool in a stream as long as the water is more than 2 feet deep.

5

## THINK LIKE A SMALL FISH.

Look for logs and rocks that offer hiding spots.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT ROD.

6

Mountain fishing—with small streams, brush-lined lakes, and smaller trout—calls for light gear. You'll be happier with a short rod (8 feet; shorter if you like exploring forested creeks). Two- to four-weight rods yield more action and play.

## BE STEALTHY.

7

Don't spook the fish: Approach from downstream and avoid casting a shadow on the water or creating a silhouette against the horizon. Stay on the bank if you can.

## TIME IT RIGHT.

8

Target mountain streams in summer through early fall. Don't waste your time on rivers that are fast and turbid.

## KEEP THEM GUESSING.

9

Don't cast to the same spot over and over; the fish will know something is up.

## GO SHORT.

10

Long casts look nice in photos, but aren't very useful in close-quarters fishing. Farther than 20 feet will most likely cause problems, such as casting over fish, which can scare them away.

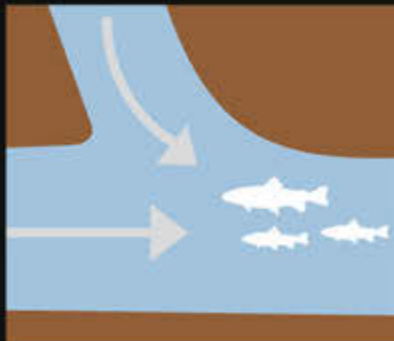
3

## READ THE RIVER.

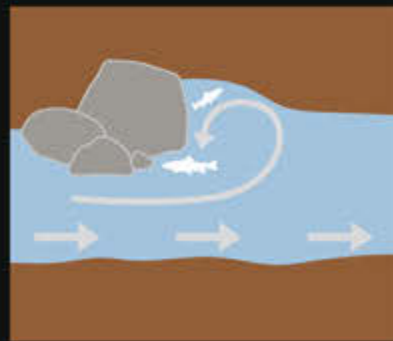
Look for areas where fish are more likely to hang out.



Undercut bank: offers protection



Confluences: higher concentration of food



Eddies: slow-moving water

**THE EXPERT** Tim Patterson, owner of RIGS Adventure Co. in southwest Colorado, has been a fly-fishing guide since external frame packs were in.





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## pass/fail



## THE CHALLENGE

## Go Waaaayy Lighter

Just how much pack weight can one hiker cut?

By Dennis Lewon

I needed my camp chair. That was what doomed my initial efforts to lighten my load. Because once you concede to carrying a chair, it's awfully easy to justify a book. And camp shoes.

Sure, I could save a few pounds by splurging on titanium cookware and a silnylon shelter and 900-fill down, but all ultralight experts agree: Any serious attempt to cut weight starts with simply taking less stuff.

So after my first few failed attempts, I determined to embrace the "less is more" ethic. When I decided to see just how light I could go for a summer overnight on the Appalachian Trail, the first thing I did was spread all of my gear across the living room.

It's amazing how much a determined comfort camper like me can cram into a 65-liter pack. *That's a lot of stuff,* I

thought. *Where do I even start?*

But of course it was obvious: The camp chair was first to go. I wasn't so attached to my little luxuries that I'd lost the ability to distinguish between need and want. Naturally, the book and camp shoes followed. Maybe this wouldn't be so hard after all. I jettisoned the other low-hanging fruit: "packable" pillow, camera, coffee press, notebook, just-in-case layers.

As the reject pile grew, I was inspired to add to it. I looked at all the gear I normally pack and assessed each product with a new zeal for minimalism. Who needs extra clothes for an overnight? And what about all the other extras that seemed so important just an hour earlier? I could part with the repair kit, which always seemed smart to bring but rarely saw use. And

my toiletry bag, small as it was, suddenly seemed extravagant. My dentist didn't have to know. Some might argue that ditching the first-aid kit was rash, but I was on a roll. Ditto the map and compass, but this was Pennsylvania, where, in truth, you're never far from a road.

But even added together, those accessories didn't amount to much. If I intended to make a meaningful dent in my load, I'd have to consider the big stuff. My tent weighed almost 4 pounds. The forecast was for dry, warm weather, and I was only going for one night. Why bother? I tossed it onto the reject pile. Then I considered my sleeping bag—a 2-pound sack I knew I'd simply end up sleeping on top of in the July heat. The bag joined the tent. I felt a surge of adrenaline, like I was breaking a rule I hadn't known existed. The feeling prompted me to ditch my inflatable sleeping pad, which weighs a pound. I never used a sleeping pad when I camped as a kid. Did I really need one now?

This was fun.

I turned my newly skeptical

eye to my kitchen kit. A hot dinner was easy to part with, but I had to pause at the thought of a morning without coffee. Ouch. But I couldn't stop now. Out went the stove, fuel, cookware, and mug. Come to think of it, John Muir famously headed into the wilderness for days with only a few crusts of bread. No one starves in 24 hours. A couple of energy bars would suffice.

I stood back and assessed my new overnight kit. I had a backpack and not much to put in it. So the pack went onto the reject pile as well and I vowed to go hiking with only what would fit in my pockets. Sorry, Ray Jardine, there's a new ultralight king in town.

No-load hiking really speeds things up at the trailhead. I hopped out of the car and started up the trail, my chocolate lab Sadie in tow. I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, with a thin fleece tied around my waist (my concession to extra layers). In my pockets: granola bars, a headlamp, a small water bottle, water-treatment tabs, a flask (some things are sacred), and a sandwich bag of dog food.



The trail weaved through a maze of boulders under a hardwood canopy that provided welcome shade. I had to resist running as the route rolled up and down along a miles-long plateau. But despite the effort-less travel, I admit it was hard to get comfortable. I couldn't help feeling a little naked, like I'd ordered dinner at a nice restaurant and then realized I'd forgotten my wallet.

The feeling was not alleviated by my encounter with an AT Ridgerunner. These good Samaritans patrol the trail for days on end, dispensing advice about backcountry safety and low-impact camping. So when I passed a solo Ridgerunner—a bearded guy in his 30s—going the opposite direction, I was a little cagey about my plans. No sense inviting a lecture about the 10 essentials. He assumed my camp was nearby and I said nothing to disabuse him of the idea.

An hour before sunset, I popped out on a clifftop overlook, where I could gaze out over

the green tunnel instead of being in it. Ten yards from the edge, I found a moss-cushioned hideaway as level and large as a twin bed. I set up camp, which is to say I put down my water bottle.

Reclining on my perch, watching the light fade from the golden sky, I felt that, given the right conditions, extreme ultralight backpacking might just catch on. Sadie was not so sanguine. She'd been camping plenty of times, and even had her own custom sleeping pad my wife had made from closed-cell foam. It didn't fit in my pocket. She nosed around for more than a few minutes before curling into a ball with a sad-eyed look that seemed to ask *This is it?* She ate her dog food with less-than-normal enthusiasm.

By 10 p.m., the humid summer air had dropped into that neutral zone that feels neither hot nor cold, like what I imagine the water in a sensory deprivation tank feels like. I fell asleep easily on my soft bed of moss. But a few hours later, I woke up

a little chilled. The temperature was still above 70°F, but even moss-cushioned ground sucks the heat right out of a motionless body clothed only in summer layers. And that moss, soft as it was, had nothing on the 2-inch-thick pad I'd left behind. I tossed and turned, trying to alleviate the pressure on my hips.

In the morning, I felt victorious despite my fitful night's sleep. I'd survived no-load camping. But hiking out was not as satisfying as I'd expected—something just wasn't right. I should have brought the coffee.

## THE VERDICT

### FAIL

**Taking less stuff is smart; taking nothing is dumb. I could have packed my bag, pad, kitchen kit, and safety gear in a daypack and still carried less than 10 pounds—a light enough load by any measure.**

## CUT WEIGHT, NOT COMFORT

Lighten your load without suffering in camp.

**1. Pack for the worst conditions you're likely to face—not the worst you can imagine.**

**2. Carry less water (it's heavy). Plan your route around water stops, treating as you go.**

**3. Can't stop yourself from filling your pack to the brim? Buy a smaller, lighter model and adapt your gear to fit.**

**4. Cook smarter. Save fuel weight with quick-cooking foods (such as couscous). Pack calorie-dense snacks like cashews and dark chocolate.**



Get more ultralight skills tips and gear picks at [backpacker.com/skills/ultralight](http://backpacker.com/skills/ultralight).



## Award Winning mtnGLO™ Tent Light Technology



Photo: Braden Gunem with the Copper Spur UL2 mtnGLO™, weighing 21lbs 14oz - Nicaragua

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# Tasty Planet

These global street favorites are cheap and quick to make—and always delicious.

By Trail Chef Jennifer Bowen

## Fancy Falafel

Fresh accessories help upgrade the backcountry version of this classic Middle Eastern meal. Got leftovers? One word: breakfast. 2 servings

- 2 pita bread rounds
- 1/2 cup falafel mix (like Fantastic Foods)
- 1 small cucumber
- 1 lemon packet (see far right)

- 2 mayo packets
- 3 Tbsp oil

### OPTIONAL

- 1 small, very firm roma tomato
- 1 Tbsp chopped parsley

**AT HOME** → Package falafel mix in a sandwich-size zip-top. Wrap cucumber and tomato each in a dry paper towel, then in a small paper bag. Loosely wrap parsley in a slightly damp paper napkin, then place in a

snack bag (leave partly open to allow for air circulation; this will keep about 3 days).

**IN CAMP** → Add 1/3 cup water to falafel and stir carefully to blend. Seal and set aside for about 10 minutes, until water is absorbed into a thick, stable paste. Over a medium flame, heat oil in a frying pan and add a small test spoonful of the falafel. While the tester is cooking, make eight small patties, about 2.5 inches wide and .5 inch thick. When the falafel in pan begins to sizzle, lower patties into the hot oil, a few at a time. Cook about 2 minutes on each side, until deep golden. Use a fork or chopsticks to turn patties away from you (to avoid splattering oil). While patties cook, divide pitas into halves and gently open to create a pocket, then add mayo to each. Remove the patties and fill each pita half with two patties. Top with sliced cucumber and lemon juice as well as optional tomato and parsley.

## Spicy Asian Fusion Chicken Tacos

East meets South in this filling finger food. Option: Sub in tofu for a vegetarian version. 2 servings

- 4 soft, taco-size flour tortillas
- 7 oz. foil packet chicken
- 1 Tbsp oil
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 2 tsp freeze-dried cilantro (salad section)
- 2 lime packets (see right)
- 3 tsp Sriracha
- 2 mayo packets

### OPTIONAL

- 1 small avocado

**AT HOME** → Pack cabbage in a loosely closed, sandwich-size zip-top bag with a moist paper towel.

**IN CAMP** → Mix mayo packets with 1 tsp (a third) of the Sriracha and lime to taste. Drain chicken, if necessary. Add oil



to pan and heat over medium-high flame. Add chicken, stirring to break up large chunks. Add remaining Sriracha and stir until chicken is well-heated. Divide between the tortillas. Top with cabbage and cilantro and drizzle mayo sauce over all.

### Pad Thai

Go beyond ramen to fulfill your noodle cravings. By skipping the fish sauce, this popular Thai treat works even for day seven. *2 servings*

6 oz. Pad Thai rice noodles (Asian section)	2 Tbsp sugar
1/2 cup freeze-dried eggs	2 lime packets
2 Tbsp freeze-dried cilantro	2 green onions, chopped
4 packets soy sauce	2 Tbsp chopped, roasted unsalted peanuts
	2 Tbsp oil

**AT HOME** → Dry chopped green onions by spreading them on a paper towel overnight (in humid areas, you may need to put them in a pre-warmed, shut-off oven). Combine eggs and cilantro in a snack-size zip-top bag. Pack noodles in a sturdy, gallon-size bag.

**IN CAMP** → Boil water in a medium pot. Fully submerge noodles, stir gently, remove from heat, and set aside (covered) for about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, add 3/4 cup water to powdered eggs; mix well. Heat 1 tsp of oil in nonstick frying pan, add eggs, and scramble until firm. When noodles are soft, carefully drain and set aside (use the bag you packed them in). Add remaining oil to now-empty noodle pot and heat over a medium flame for about 30 seconds. Add soy sauce, sugar, and lime, stir once, then toss in noodles, coating them with the sauce. Finish by gently tossing in egg and onions. Top with peanuts.

### Bistro Breakfast Sandwiches

These breakfast sammies are grab-and-go perfection. Croissants are actually very rugged when flattened a bit, and they elevate every filling. *2 servings*

2 croissants, halved lengthwise (like a hoagie roll)
1/2 cup freeze-dried eggs
1 Tbsp bacon bits
1 whole, unripe avocado
2 slices pepper jack cheese
1 tsp oil

**AT HOME** → Carefully flatten each croissant (for easier packing), then wrap in a paper towel, then in plastic. Pack eggs with bacon in a zip-top baggie. Wrap cheese slices individually in plastic.

**ON THE TRAIL** → Make scrambled eggs: Add 3/4 cup water to powdered eggs and mix well. Heat oil in nonstick frying pan, add eggs, and scramble until cooked completely. Divide eggs, cheese, and avocado between two croissants.

### EASY UPGRADE

#### Just add fruit

True Citrus packets are made with the crystallized juice and oils from lemons and limes. Find them in the drink mix aisle at the store or at [truelemonstore.com](http://truelemonstore.com) (\$5 for 32 packets).



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# King of the World

Show off your friends' alpine accomplishments with shots that capture the full glory of a trip to the mountains.

By Photo Editor  
Genny Fullerton

## PLAN AHEAD

Step one: Get in shape (see page 84). Photographers need the fitness to run ahead, scramble off-trail for a better angle, and catch up if they get behind. Step two: Sleep high. Plan overnights at elevations that make it easier to shoot alpine scenes during the best light of the day (dawn and dusk).

## SCOUT YOUR SPOT

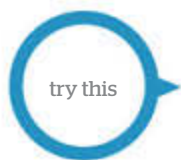
Choose a location with landscape features such as ridgelines and false summits that provide clearly differentiated foreground and background. Shadowed valleys, layers of low clouds, or a silhouetted foreground can help emphasize the separation between what's near and far. Keep your aperture small so both foreground and background appear sharp.

## ADD A PERSON

Partners with colorful gear make better models. Climb up and away from your subject to capture the view over their shoulder; shooting from above shrinks the person and emphasizes the grandeur of the scene. To create a sense of scale, back up until the person's height takes up no more than a quarter of the frame.

## PERFECT YOUR FRAMING

Compose so the mountains jut well into the top third of the frame, and maneuver so your human subject is against a contrasting plain or solid background. Place him off-center, looking toward the middle of the frame. Or, in the right circumstances (see below), try breaking the rule of thirds: Center your subject as he faces straight away from or toward you.



**BEND THE RULE OF THIRDS** Even pros mostly follow photography's first rule of composition, but, just as importantly, they know when to break it. Quick refresher: In general, line up your photo's points of interest (like horizons) along the lines or intersections of an imaginary 3-by-3 grid (see right). But the rule is merely a shortcut to visual balance, and in some images, you'll find more harmony by breaking it. If, as in the shot above, your scene has strong lines leading to the center and is symmetrical side to side, centering your subject better preserves that balance.





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Photo credit: Andreas Strandh

## What's in Kyle Peter's pack

Kyle Peter, professional adventure racer, knows the importance of safety when racing and in the outdoors. You'll never find Kyle on the trail without his Adventure<sup>®</sup> Medical Kits Ultralight / Watertight .7 kit, a Survive Outdoors Longer Scout<sup>™</sup> kit, and Ben's<sup>®</sup> tick and insect repellent.

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# Survival

Patty Miller, 71, was attacked by a grizzly on July 12, 2013, outside Babb, Montana.

As told to Darlena Cunha



**out alive:**  
bear attack

Her roar echoed throughout the valley as she dropped down to chase after me at a speed I didn't think possible. "So this is how it ends," I thought, as I started to run.





I HAD RENTED AN OLD TRAILER UP IN BABB, MONTANA, JUST EAST OF GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW. MY BROTHER HAS A SUMMER FISHING CABIN JUST A QUARTER OF A MILE AWAY. EVERY MORNING I'D TAKE LONG WALKS AROUND THE PINE-FRINGED LAKE WITH MY TWO LITTLE HAVANESE DOGS, ANGUS AND SHAMUS. THEY WERE MY BEST FRIENDS.

Maybe I should have known something was wrong when the bigger dog, Angus, didn't want to go. He normally loved our walks. But I ignored it and forced him out anyway, thinking he'd change his mind on the way. I clipped my phone holster to my waist, and strapped my bear spray and police whistle to my belt.

The dirt road around the lake offered little shade, so at the top of a nearby hill with a clearing, I took off my jacket and tied it around my waist. The morning was eerily quiet; no birds were chirping. Still, I saw nothing, so I kept walking. I had made it 100 feet down the hill when I heard a snap.

The two cubs that tumbled out onto the road were the cutest things I'd ever seen. The full-sized momma grizzly bear lumbering behind them was not. She stopped when she saw me, not more than a telephone pole's length away. She reared up onto her hind legs, must have been 8 feet tall. Her roar echoed throughout the valley as she dropped down to chase after me at a speed I didn't think possible. "So this is how it ends," I thought as I started to run.

My brother had warned me about what to do should I encounter a bear. You're supposed to spray it from the ground up so that the mist gets up its nose, he'd said. If that doesn't work, crouch over, make yourself as tiny as possible with your knees to your chest and head down. Play dead and hope it loses interest. When you're actually running from a bear, I can assure you, all that goes right out the window.

I sprinted for the brush near where they'd come out and dove in. My tiny dogs were jumping 3 feet in the air to

stop her. She struck at them, then came for me. I couldn't reach my spray. I tried to take one last look at the beautiful, peaceful area I loved, but the bear blocked my view. I bent over, covering my face with my arms, cowering for my life, praying I could be quiet enough to make her magically disappear.

Her claws cut through my arm first, tearing it down away from my neck, the searing pain distracting me from what happened next. I thought she was scraping my scalp with her claws, but they tell me she bit my skull three times. My head was ducked down toward my body, my eyes shut tight against this nightmare. I didn't look at her. "Never make eye contact with a bear," my brother had told me. She pulled me out of the brush and raked her claws over my abdomen all the way up to my neck, trying to get at my organs. Before I blacked out, the only emotion I felt was anger. I was mad. Because I thought I was going to die, and I didn't want to die.

They tell me she missed my carotid artery by the width of one hair. They tell me I lived because her cubs wandered off and she went to find them.

A dog's bark brought me back to consciousness. Only one dog. I knew immediately that Angus was dead. My arm hurt, and I thought there might be something wrong with my head, but I just got up and unleashed my remaining dog. He took off toward home. It was 7:10 in the morning, and I thought, "This will be easy. I'll just call for help."

But my phone holster was empty. I'd put on the holster but forgotten the phone. I was alone.

As I struggled to walk, waves of nausea washed over me, and I kept getting dizzy. I wobbled and inched my way forward. I heard or felt this *gloomp, whoomp,*

*gloomp* sound coming from my head. I didn't know or care what it was. I had one mission. Get home, get help.

I was blowing my whistle, but I was running out of air. I was yelling for help, but it was so windy no one could hear me. I was going into shock. I had to sit down. No one was coming for me; I was alone.



Miller lost this necklace during the attack and another hiker later returned it to her. Regaining part of her life from before the attack gave her strength.



key  
skills

## SURVIVE A GRIZZLY SCARE

**1. Don't panic.** In a low voice, announce your presence and back away slowly. Don't run: Flight could trigger a bear's prey drive and it can sprint up to 30 mph. If the bear huffs or growls at you—its way of expressing aggression—speak louder and wave your arms.

**2. Stand your ground.** Most bear charges are bluffs. If you have bear spray (you should, and it should be within reach) and the bear is approaching within 20 yards, spray a low cloud that envelops the charging bruin. Get upwind of the bear if you can, but bear spray leaves the can at around 70 mph, so the spray remains effective at close range.

**3. Get aggressive.** If the bear approaches within 10 yards, aim

slightly above its head to direct short bursts of spray into his eyes, mouth, and nose. Now's a good time for that war cry, too.

**4. Play dead.** Is it still coming? Time to convince it you're not a threat. Put your hands behind your neck and lay belly down to protect vital organs and nerves. Remain still while waiting for the bear to leave the area—it may return if it notices renewed movement.

**5. Know when to fight.** Most grizzly attacks are reactions to fear or attempts to protect young. But if the bear begins to feed, it's time to fight. Gouge at the sensitive spots like its face, nose, and eyes. Get primal. This is the fight of your life.

—Corey Buhay

I sat waiting, hoping against hope that someone would drive by. It took three and a half hours. At 11:40 a.m., a big truck rumbled by, driven by a schoolteacher taking some students on a fishing trip. I called out, "Do you think you could come over here and give me a hand?"

They stopped and scrambled toward me, rushing me into the truck and calling 911. In the middle of that, my sister-in-law came by, frantically asking them if they'd seen a dog. When she recognized me, she got in the truck with me and covered me with her shirt, then lay over me to keep me warm. We met the EMTs about 6 miles from where I was attacked, and the ambulance took me 40 minutes to Browning hospital. My eyes had swollen shut. It felt like paint was seeping down a wall, but the wall was my eyes and the paint was pain.

When they cut my clothes off, I felt like a piece of meat on a slab, exposed and raw. They gave me four pints of blood and immediately airlifted me to Kalispell Regional Medical Center. I went through seven and a half hours of surgery that first time, and had three subsequent operations in the coming days. They never actually told me what they were repairing, and I never asked.

Months later, at a wound check, they told me the bear had ripped all my muscles in the back of my neck. That she had ripped off one of my ears, and they had to sew it back on. The bear had smashed my jaw all the way back through my head, had crushed the bones under my eyelids.

I survived a fractured nose, several deep lacerations on the back of my neck, three bites to my head, and long, deep cuts through my torso. I lay in the hospital for three weeks, half in intensive care, the other half in rehab. The bones in my eyes required more than 24 tiny nails to piece them back together. I only regained sight in one eye; the other is permanently shut—the nerves in my right eyelid are crushed and non-responsive, meaning it will not open on its own.

I'm not upset about my injuries, just grateful to be alive. The alternative was death. The worst part about this entire adventure was the loss of my beloved dog Angus. My brother's neighbor found him and buried him on my brother's land for me, but I just cannot bring myself to go visit. It's too painful. The bear broke up my family.

As soon as I got out of the hospital, I went back to my trailer. No bear is going to deter me from living the life I love. I'm not afraid and I don't stay indoors. As soon as I was able, I was out hiking again—only I go with a partner and always keep the bear spray in my hand. I still go to the lake every year. Shamus comes with me, but he spends his walks now looking for his lost brother.

# LIGHTEN UP

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# A Glass Bottle

**Found a glass bottle? Putting a message in there and casting it into the sea is a major Hail Mary. Try these 6 techniques instead.**

By Jason Schwartz, Rocky Mountain Bushcraft

## BOIL WATER.

Wet a bit of cordage (to prevent burning) and tie it around the lip of a partially filled bottle (you don't want it to boil over and douse the flames). Suspend close enough to your fire that flames lick the bottle. Nutritious upgrade: Pop a few grubs or worms in there.

## MAKE TINDER.

Place a bit of dry-rotted wood, cotton, or linen cloth inside your bottle and lay it flat on some fire coals. (Note: Don't pack the bottle full or it might explode.) Once the material stops smoldering, use a green stick to fish the bottle off the heat. Charred tinder like this ignites easily from a spark (unlike a lot of natural material), but won't flame up, so you'll have to place it in dry tinder and blow to coax up a flame.

## PACK WATER.

Carve a plug from a bit of green wood if your bottle lacks a cap.

## START A FIRE.

Harness the sun (like with a magnifying glass) by filling the bottle with water or other clear liquid. Cork the end with your thumb and hold the bottle horizontal and close to the ground. Fiddle with the angle to concentrate sunrays onto your tinder (see left).

## HONE YOUR BLADE.

Grip the bottle by its neck and place it on a flat surface. Place your blade so it forms a 20-degree angle against the bottle and push the blade away from you. Flip the blade and, maintaining the same 20-degree angle, pull the blade toward you (carefully, but this technique is more effective) to sharpen the other side.

## STAB, CUT, SLICE, ETC.

No use crying over a broken bottle. Shards work as knife blades, spearheads, and strikers for firesteels. Just make sure to protect your hands.

PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM / KEDSANE



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## Milkin' It

**Is self-nursing a viable survival strategy?**

**Did you hear about that trail runner in New Zealand who got lost and drank her own breast milk to survive the night? Is she some kind of survival genius?**

—Dan Wilmes, via email

→ Two things about that: One, not sure survival genius adequately describes someone who got lost on a trail run. Second, and more importantly, she wasn't in much real danger, not from starvation anyway. We've trained ourselves to eat three squares a day and named the sensation that forms between those feedings hunger. While normally as good a reminder as your car's gas light, hunger is less of a reliable signal in survival situations.

Simply put: It takes a while to starve to death—a long while. Thirty days is a reasonable guideline. To fixate on food draws your attention away from where it belongs: securing shelter and warmth (the lack of which will kill you a lot quicker than starvation). The woman in New Zealand didn't do either of those all that well, though she did pile dirt on top of herself (leaf litter would have lofted better). However, I'd be remiss not to award her some style points—once I get my head around the anatomy.

**If I get lost on a cloudy day, how can I find north without GPS or compass?**

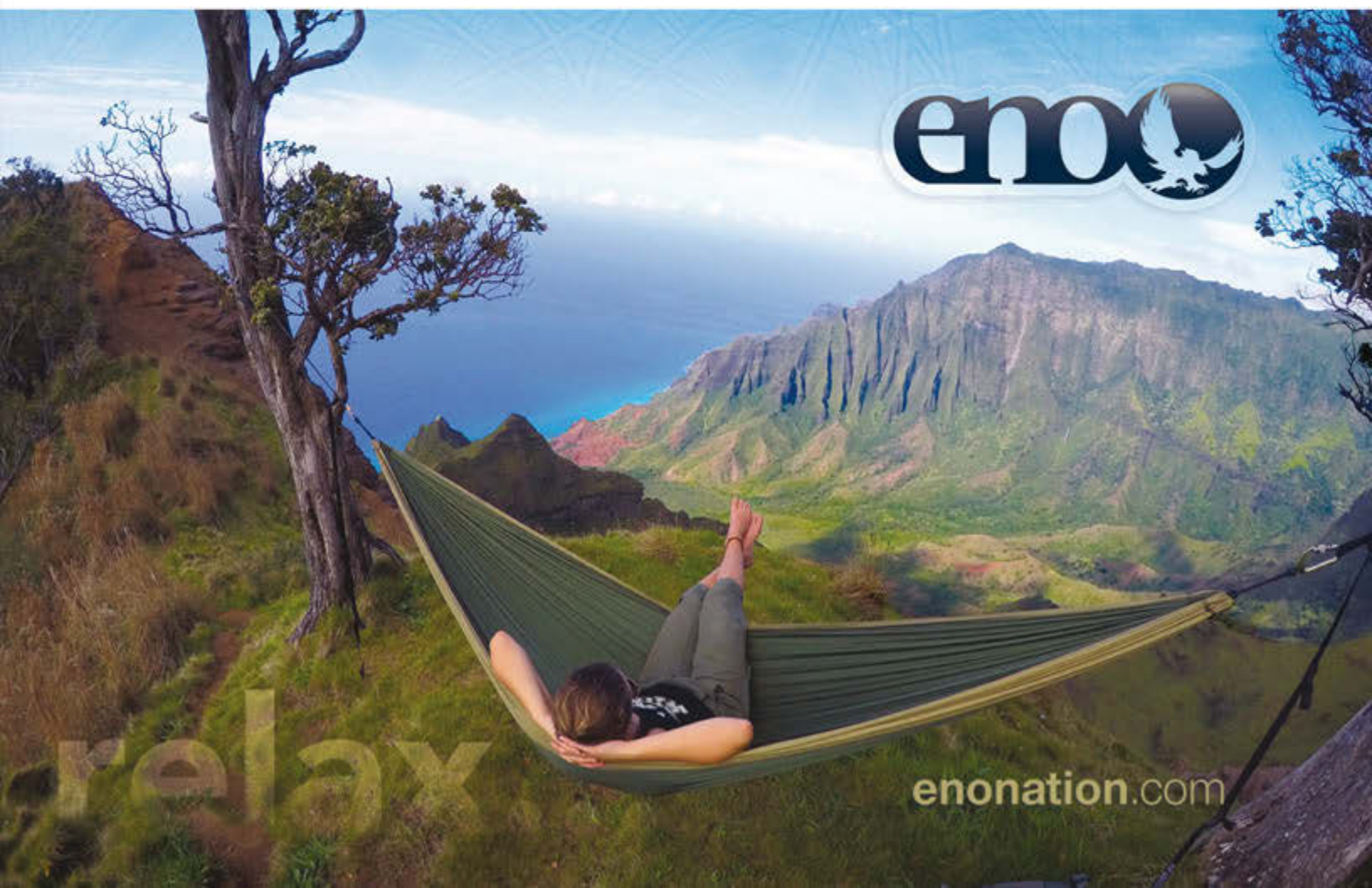
—Walter Goddard, via Facebook

→ First things first: Never trust a patch of moss, the limbs of a tree, or an anthill. These things are more likely than not to lead you more astray. Your best bet is to make a compass out of a long piece of magnetized metal (like a paperclip or a needle), something that floats (leaf, cork, bit of plastic), and a puddle of still water. Without that, you can still try the shadow-stick method, which'll work on many overcast days. (See the gamut of options at [backpacker.com/navigation](http://backpacker.com/navigation).) But if that fails you, stay put until the skies clear. Don't make things worse for yourself.

Got a question for Den Mother?

Email it to [denmother@backpacker.com](mailto:denmother@backpacker.com).

ILLUSTRATION BY BRETT AFFRONTI







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## gear

# Little Big Shoes

These light-weight, low-cut hikers are stronger than you think.  
By Billy Brown



Do your feet a favor: Downsize to footwear that's light and low-cut, with the feel of a sneaker and the support and protection of a bigger boot. You'll love the comfort on dayhikes and the performance on weekend trips. To find the best models for every hiker, our crew of ultrarunners, mountaineers, and hikers tested dozens of shoes all over the planet: on glaciers in Nepal, over peat fields in Ireland, and through waterfalls deep in the Grand Canyon. These six pairs came out on top.

**Test data**  
333 test days  
10,580 miles hiked  
8 boots sawed in half  
(to inspect midsole construction)

► Salewa's Speed Ascent versus very big rock: Not only does this shoe have a stiffened midsole, it employs 36 lace loops for dialing in the perfect fit.





# field test low-cut hikers



## Why we like it

## Support

## Comfort

## Breathability

## Durability

## Traction

## Overall



Scarpa Oxygen GTX

A sock-like fit earned it a perfect comfort score.

**3.9** ▶ Two layers of EVA in the midsole (one dense, one soft) provide stability without sacrificing flex in the toes. You get striding comfort with plenty of support for a 30-pound pack.

**5.0** ▶ A padded tongue attaches to the elastic cuff around the ankle and hugs the foot like a slipper. **"Taking them off is the last thing on my mind when I get to camp," one tester says.** Fit is best for narrow to average feet.

**4.7** ▶ The shoe's construction—with wide swaths of mesh along the perimeter—makes the most of Gore-Tex Surround technology (see box, bottom right). After postholing (with gaiters) on a 70°F day on Mt. Shasta, one tester said, "I was sweating buckets the whole time, but my feet were dry when I took my shoes off."

**4.0** ▶ A thick rubber toe rand and the mostly suede upper held up to months of scree scrambles and off-trail hiking in California's Trinity Alps. Even the mesh sidewalls proved resistant to fraying.

**4.0** ▶ The Vibram rubber—which balances the stickiness of an approach shoe with the durability of a hiking shoe—held firm on granite, snow, and during wet river crossings.

**4.3**

\$189; 1 lb. 15 oz.;  
scarpa.com



Zamberlan 132 Air Round GTX RR

It looks and feels like a sneaker, but performs like a light hiker.

**3.5** ▶ The soft EVA midsole provides cushion and the plastic under-arch shank offers good support for a 20-pound load, reports a tester who hiked to Everest basecamp in them. "I usually like beefier boots, but my feet only felt tired after the longest days."

**4.4** ▶ **The soft midsole absorbs the shock of rough trails, and the padded tongue prevents pressure points when you ratchet down the laces.** Best for high-volume/wide feet.

**4.7** ▶ Gore-Tex Surround kept our feet sweat-free on Northern California trails in 90°F heat.

**4.0** ▶ The mesh upper is much tougher than it looks, thanks to the laminate plastic overlay. After more than 100 miles, some scratches and slight fraying are all we can see, and the midsole shows no creasing or delamination.

**3.5** ▶ The 3mm lugs and firm rubber proved grippy on hard dirt but lost purchase when terrain got wet. "I slipped on a wet rock and took a digger into a creek," says one tester.

**4.2**

\$180; 1 lb. 15 oz.;  
zamberlanusa.com



Oboz Teewinot

This is the toughest shoe in the lineup.

**4.0** ▶ A nylon shank runs from heel to midfoot, so the Teewinot has some flexibility. But the firm EVA midsole gave us plenty of support with a 35-pound pack and protection on the uneven and rocky trails of California's Lassen Volcanic National Park.

**3.9** ▶ The soft foam under the heel and ball boost shock absorption. We like the deep heelcup, but the laces don't crank down tight enough on the high-volume uppers, which led to toe-bump on downhills for some testers.

**3.5** ▶ A full suede upper does wonders for durability, but limits breathability (even without a waterproof liner). Rows of small perforations along both sides of the shoe enhanced ventilation in dry-weather temps up to 80°F, but were less effective when the suede got wet.

**4.5** ▶ Thick rubber covers the entire toebox. **The upper is unscathed after months of testing that included wading through a field of thorny manzanita bushes in California's Castle Crags State Park.**

**4.0** ▶ The 4mm multidirectional lugs held firm on steep, gravelly descents, and the tacky rubber stuck to wet rock near California's Boulder Creek Falls.

**4.0**

\$120; 2 lbs. 2 oz.;  
obozfootwear.com





**Chaco Outcross Evo 3**

The breathable and quick-drying mesh upper make this the best hiker for hot weather.

**3.0** ▶ The footbed provides excellent arch support, but the soft midsole lacks torsional stability with packs heavier than 20 pounds. Also, that soft midsole caused sore feet on rough trails.

**4.8** ▶ These shoes are soft as butter. Wear them with or without socks, thanks to the smooth polyester liner and a non-removable footbed made of soft yet supportive EVA.

**5.0** ▶ **Short of sandals, these are as breathable as shoes get.** The mesh and webbing upper is open enough to allow air to pass through, but still kept grit out when we crossed silty creeks. Bonus: The non-waterproof, open mesh dries quickly.

**3.4** ▶ The nylon webbing and laminated sidewalls held up well during on-trail testing, but they suffered some fraying once we started going off-trail. The midsole shows zero wear after 85 miles, which is surprising, considering how soft it is.

**3.9** ▶ The shallow 2mm lugs had trouble holding on mud and scree, but the soft rubber shined during waterfall scrambles and river crossings.

**3.9**

\$119; 1 lb. 11 oz.;  
chaco.com



**Salewa Speed Ascent**

Enjoy a rolling gait that makes it easy to eat up the miles.

**3.9** ▶ A firm plastic plate creeps up the sides of the midfoot, acting as a cradle, so our feet felt stable under the weight of 30-pound packs. The aggressive sole rocker redistributes pressure to the heel and ball of the foot (the parts that are best at handling impact).

**4.3** ▶ **The rockered sole also enhances comfort by encouraging a smoother stride with less stomping and more gliding.** The unique double-row lacing system let us widen or narrow the upper for a universally perfect fit.

**3.0** ▶ The tightly woven synthetic and leather upper is more durable than breathable. Our feet felt clammy at the end of 10-mile hikes in Colorado.

**4.0** ▶ The rubber toe and heel caps and suede toebox held up well to scree fields in Death Valley.

**3.8** ▶ The Vibram sole excelled when we were scrambling up Thimble Peak in Death Valley. The 3mm to 5mm lugs are shaped like tiny horseshoes, providing great hold on soft terrain.

**3.8**

\$140; 1 lb. 4 oz.;  
salewa.com



**Columbia Peakfreak XCRSN XCEL OutDry**

It has the most support of any shoe in the test.

**4.2** ▶ The stiff midsole's plastic shank is the longest (at 4.25 inches, it runs from heel to ball) and thickest (tied with Oboz) in the lineup—giving this shoe enough **support to handle hikes with a 40-pound pack.**

**3.0** ▶ “Good, not great,” was the consensus among our testers, most of whom felt that the shoes needed more cushion. Best for average feet.

**4.5** ▶ We were surprised by the breathability of the proprietary waterproof membrane on warm-weather hikes in California. But our feet overheated on dayhikes when the mercury hit 90°F and above.

**3.2** ▶ The TPU and mesh upper only showed light scuffing after months of testing, but the midsole started to show wrinkles after just 80 miles.

**3.5** ▶ The multidirectional lugs gripped on dry terrain, but their shallow depth (3mm) proved inferior in muddy conditions.

**3.7**

\$110; 1 lb. 10 oz.;  
columbia.com



## BOOST COMFORT

### Socks

Opt for wool or synthetic blends with a little extra underfoot cushion. A good pick for summer: Feetures Elite Merino+ Light Cushion Quarter (\$17; [featuresrunning.com](http://featuresrunning.com))

### Insoles

Add better arch support, improve fit, and stabilize your foot with an aftermarket insole (we like Superfeet Green; \$45; [superfeet.com](http://superfeet.com)).

### Lacing

Creative lacing can solve fit problems and improve comfort. Learn more at [backpacker.com/perfectlace](http://backpacker.com/perfectlace).

### Blister prevention

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## Hit the Water

In a kayak, you'll see new terrain and score remote beach camps while your boat does all the heavy lifting. Here's everything you need to build a high-performance package for less than \$1,500. **By Eugene Buchanan**

### 1. BOAT Current Designs Vision 135 R

For your first boat, choose plastic (not fiberglass), since it's tough and affordable. Plastic pushes the Vision to 50 pounds, but the tradeoff is worth it. On the water, the 13'6" Vision feels nimble and fast, thanks to a narrow bow that aids in wave-punching and boosts responsiveness and tracking. A smooth edge between the bottom of the hull and its side-walls (tech speak: soft chine) aids in turning. The wide cockpit and two hatches store 140 liters of gear (that's 8,545 cubic inches, or about 1.5 times the typical expedition-size backpack), which proved enough for a multiday outing on the Colorado River through Canyonlands National Park. **\$1,119; 50 lbs.; cdkayak.com**

### 2. PFD MTI Journey

Get comfort and, of course, flotation without pricey bells and whistles. Contoured front foam panels—combined with four adjustment points and a waist belt—conformed to all testers' torsos, while open sides kept us cool in Utah's Ruby-Horseshoe Canyon.

The soft polyester lining on the inside of the shoulders prevents chafing, and reflective trim kept us visible when we were a tad late getting back to camp. **\$54; 15 oz.; mtiadventurewear.com**

### 3. PADDLE Harmony Sea Passage Fiberglass

You can find a cheaper paddle, but not one that performs this well or lasts this long. The Sea Passage has a two-piece fiberglass shaft (take it apart for easy storage) and asymmetrical fiberglass/polypropylene blades that reduce weight (and therefore arm fatigue). But it also offers power for flats and punching waves, as we discovered while touring Colorado's Steamboat Lake in stiff breezes. Adjustments let you feather the blades to slice through wind or keep them straight to reduce wrist stress. **\$110; 2 lbs. 3 oz.; harmonygear.com**

### 4. DRYBAG SealLine Kodiak Taper

Use every square inch of the storage space at the tapered ends of your kayak with these conical drybags. Made from tough, waterproof, 210-denier nylon with

welded seams, the smooth fabric slides freely into tight bow and stern compartments. "I watched some friends wrestling with pudgy, sticky drybags, but mine were stowed in a flash," said one tester after a trip in Washington's San Juan Islands. Bonus: A one-way purge valve makes compression a breeze. Available in three sizes. **\$50-60; seallinegear.com**

### 5. SPRAY SKIRT Seals Sprayskirts Coastal Tour

Made of tough nylon packcloth (as opposed to the traditional neoprene, which is heavy, hot, and hard to get on), the Coastal Tour stays secure thanks to a grippy edge guard, while a tensioned deck stay keeps the surface super-taut so it can shed water. We like the chest band with adjustable/removable suspenders, which kept the skirt snug and high during a long paddle on Colorado's Hahns Peak Lake.

Bonus: The zippered mesh pocket kept our binocs and sunscreen handy. **\$90; 1 lb. 5 oz.; seallskirts.com**

**STAY SAFE**  
Always pack an on-water rescue kit. Get the scoop at [backpacker.com/kayaksafe](http://backpacker.com/kayaksafe).





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## field notes

# The latest word from our testers

## bargain

### REI Trail 40



For her 16-day journey to Everest Base Camp, our gear editor wanted killer comfort and convenience. The Trail 40 delivers. It has the structure

and padding to support loads up to 25 pounds. "I barely noticed it on my back," she says, "even on epic days postholing over 17,500-foot passes." But it's the made-for-trail-living packbag that really shines. It opens via a U-shaped zipper with four sliders: Use it as a top-loader, peel back the entire front panel, or zip from the corners to access the bottom without exposing the rest. The stretchy side pockets

keep 1-liter bottles secure and huge hipbelt pockets swallow iPhone, snacks, sunscreen, knife, lip balm, and mini-wallet. Bonus: sweet price. \$109; 3 lbs.; rei.com

## multitasker

### L.L.Bean Pathfinder LED Cap



At first, we thought this lighted ball cap was, well, dorky. So we gave it to our kids for a long weekend of camping. By the second night, we stole it back. After all, you need a light and you need a hat;

it's cleverly efficient. The Pathfinder is a simple cotton cap (we wish it were nylon) with three LEDs and a clickable button built discretely into the brim. Three settings offer different brightness levels (the highest is bright enough for trail hiking). It won't always take the place of a full-powered headlamp, but for warm weather camping, it perfectly fits the, ahem, bill. \$20; 4.2 oz.; llbean.com

## versatile layer

### Minus 33 Isolation/Sequoia Midweight 1/4 Zip

When a puffy's too warm and a fleece is too bulky, a thin wool layer is just the ticket, and this one

is a bargain. Our New England tester



wore the Sequoia (women's) as a high-output midlayer for more than a month's worth of frigid, stormy days this winter, and she continues to wear it as a warm-weather insulator. It's slightly thicker than typical wool long johns, and the relaxed fit doesn't cling like so many other wool zip-tees we've tried. The 18.5-micron merino "just gets softer with each washing," says our tester. "It's become my go-to cozy piece for both the backcountry and daily wear." The fabric shows no signs of pilling—even

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in high-abrasion areas like underneath pack straps—but the interior finishing could be improved. We see signs of fraying along the flatlock seams. \$76; 8.8 oz. (w's M); m's S-XXL, w's XS-XXXL; minus33.com

### ultralight

#### Eider Airy



Airy is right: This shell became our top pick among

dozens of test jackets for high-octane activities that demand high breathability and low weight. The rear mesh vented sweat off our backs on cool Cascade trail runs, and the paper-

thin Winddefender fabric shed mist and light drizzle (real rain eventually soaked through, especially at the pack straps). Underarm ports vent more steam, and Lycra hem, wrist, and hood linings seal out drafts. In Patagonia's Torres del Paine National Park, the Airy kept our tester dry on the uphills and repelled winds up high. A single pocket just barely fits an iPhone 6. \$150; 4.9 oz. (m's M); m's XS-3XL, w's 4-16; eider.com

### bargain

#### SteriPen Classic 3

This latest iteration of the Adventurer Opti (a 2011 Editors' Choice winner)

has all the convenience of its big brother—just dip and swirl—but for 20 bucks less. Tradeoff: Instead of tiny disc batteries, the Classic runs on four AAs, so it's a bit bulkier (about 7 by 1.5 inches) and heavier (by 2.4 ounces with batteries). The UV lamp purifies up to 8,000 liters and fresh lithium batteries will treat 150 liters (according to the company). We used it for two weeks in Nepal, where it treated up to 8 liters per day without fail. "It's great in the backcountry," says one tester, "and it's also perfect for treating city water in developing countries." \$70; 6.2 oz.; steripen.com



## Ask Kristin

### Tips from the gear editor

**Q:** I'm shopping for my first backpacking tent. What's the difference between a \$100 model and a \$300 one?

**A:** Tents with wildly different price tags can look similar, especially online. Here are the key differences. **1) Poles:** Sub-\$100 tents always have fiberglass poles; pricier ones have aluminum, which is lighter and

far more durable. Do *not* get a tent with fiberglass poles for backpacking.

**2) Doors:** Cheaper tents typically have just one door and vestibule; more expensive ones have two, which is way more convenient. **3) Weight:** Compare the weights and square footage. You usually get a better ratio in more expensive tents.

**4) Seam-sealing:** Higher-end tents are almost always seam-taped for waterproofness. Cheaper ones require DIY seam-sealing.

One of the best deals around? REI's **Half Dome 2** (rei.com), which has all the high-end features we like for \$199. Ask your own gear questions at [backpacker.com/askkristin](http://backpacker.com/askkristin).

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- 7/2/15 [REI](#)  
(MARLTON, NJ) 6:30 PM
- 7/7/15 [REI](#)  
(CONSHOHOCKEN, PA) 6:30 PM
- 7/9/15 [REI](#)  
(ROCKVILLE, MD) 6:30 PM
- 7/14/15 [BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN SPORTS](#)  
(VIRGINIA BEACH, VA) 6:30 PM
- 7/15/15 [BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN SPORTS](#)  
(CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA) 6:30 PM
- 7/22-7/26 [FLOYDFEST](#)  
(FLOYD, VA)
- 7/30/15 [ALPINE SHOP](#)  
(KIRKWOOD, MO) 6:30 PM
- 7/31/15 [ALPINE SHOP](#)  
(COLUMBIA, MO) 6:30 PM
- 8/4/15 [BACKWOODS](#)  
(OKLAHOMA CITY, OK) 7:00 PM

For more details please visit  
[BACKPACKER.COM/EVENTS](http://BACKPACKER.COM/EVENTS)  
[BACKPACKER.COM/GETOUTMORE](http://BACKPACKER.COM/GETOUTMORE)



**RHINO-RACK**

**NITE IZE**







100 YEARS,  
100 THINGS WE LOVE

All year, we're counting down the things that make the NPS special. See our progress so far at [backpacker.com/nps100](http://backpacker.com/nps100).

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#NPS  
100

## PARKS ARE MORE EXCITING

IF YOU WANT A PREDICTABLE FAMILY TRIP, GO TO DISNEYLAND. WHO KNOWS WHAT'LL HAPPEN ON A NATIONAL PARK ADVENTURE? **BY DENNIS LEWON**





The bear was going to step on me.

It was a full-grown black bear, driven in my direction by a pot-banging crowd of campers. The noise clearly bothered the bruin, but not so much as to speed its exit. This was a Yosemite bear, after all. It wasn't easily spooked. It moved slowly, methodically, a hulking shadow lumbering across the night-dark campsite, closing the 40-foot gap between me and my cookware-clanging family.

As a kid, I liked to take my sleeping bag and scout a private spot to bed down. Not too far away from camp, of course, but enough to get some separation. I was 12 years old, and took any sliver of independence I could find.

On this night I found it near Yosemite's Vogelsang Lake, where my family—mom, dad, and 13-year-old sister—and I were camping with some friends. Together we'd embarked on our first backpacking trip in a national park, hiking 7 miles up Rafferty Creek to a backcountry site near one of Yosemite's famed High Sierra Camps.

There, a ranger warned us that bears had been frequenting the camp at night. Hence my parents slept with (clean) pots and pans at the ready.

*Clang clang clang clang.*

The noise woke me and I saw the bear coming straight at my carefully chosen nook, where I was slightly concealed by boulders. Did it see me? Did I have time to move? I was laying in my sleeping bag, arms inside the sack. I felt pinned like a butterfly in a display case. The bear was less than 10 feet away.

This would have been an ideal moment to yell "Hey, bear," but I didn't. At this point my parents might have realized I was in the bear's path, because the clanging got a little faster, a little louder. More urgent. *Clangclangclangclang.*

The change had no effect on the bear's pace. It continued sauntering toward me, apparently unaware of my presence. Another yard and it was definitely going to step on me.

Then it abruptly veered away, altering its course at the last minute and missing my head by a few feet. I got up and moved my bag a lot closer to the others. Independence could wait, at least in Yosemite.

DESPITE GROWING UP A FOUR-HOUR DRIVE FROM the park, in a family that hiked and camped, I'd never been to Yosemite before. We went backpacking most years, but

in a Northern California wilderness where the bears were skittish (I'd never seen one) and rangers apparently the same (ditto).

In fact, if I'd been to a national park before, I don't recall. Kids don't pay attention to which government agency—if any—manages the land they're camping on. But something tipped me off that our Yosemite trip was different than any we'd done before. Maybe I noticed the crowded trailhead parking lot in Tuolumne Meadows, but I doubt it. Maybe we stopped at the visitor center and perused a display about the park's glacial history. Even if we did, it didn't make a lasting impression. Maybe it was an accumulation of little clues, like passing through the entrance station (you had to pay to get in, like going to a movie?) and the granite vistas that even a kid could tell were several shades more stunning than any he'd seen before.

In any case, I do recall the moment that it all came together and I thought, *Wow, this place is great.* It was when my sister tripped on an exposed root and fell face forward on the trail.

Her fall occurred on the first day, on the hike in, a few miles up the trail. The path ascended gradually along Rafferty Creek. I was hiking with my family and our friends, a family of five. Us kids, all between the ages of 8 and 13, carried external frame packs, as most backpackers did in the late '70s. The packs were first-day heavy, naturally, so when my sister, Karin, turtled in the middle of the trail, righting herself proved difficult.

Actually, it proved impossible. The classic Kelty frame, with a sleeping bag awkwardly strapped on top, had trapped her in the prone position. When she tried to raise

her head it clunked against the metal frame. Likewise, the pack prevented her from rolling over onto her back. She was truly stuck—face in the dirt and rocks. And as she has repeatedly reminded us over the years since, no one immediately went to her rescue. We were too busy laughing.

The amount of time that elapsed between when Karin fell and when my dad helped her up remains a touchy point in family history. But regardless of how you judged the delay—not enough, too much, just right—the incident distinguished this hike from all others. Of course, she could have fallen on any trail, in any wilderness. But she didn't. She fell in Yosemite.

ON DAY THREE—AFTER the bear waltzed through camp—the four parents decided to go on a dayhike to a higher lake. The kids, naturally, wanted to stay at

*continues on page 66* →

## THE FIRST 100 YEARS

**World War II** brought patriotic pressure on the NPS to extract raw materials from the park system, including salt from Death Valley and tungsten from Yosemite. Most controversially, Olympic National Park's virgin Sitka spruce forests were coveted for use in airplane construction. Newton B. Drury, the park service's fourth director, resisted such logging efforts, writing that "critical necessity rather than convenience should be the governing reason for such a sacrifice," and that every last alternative should be exhausted before "an outstanding natural spectacle is lost to America forever." Although Olympic eventually allowed limited timber harvesting at the behest of President Roosevelt, the park successfully staved off large-scale logging through war's end. At the time, the conflict marked the NPS's largest challenge yet to its mission to preserve park resources for future generations.

—Trent Knoss



## JUNIOR RANGER BADGES

**There's so much** to learn about a new place. If only the experts could walk us through the highlights in a fun, accessible way. Oh wait; that exists. The best part: You can get your badge at any age. Consider that a challenge.





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#NPS  
100

## THE BACKCOUNTRY SWIMMING IS SUPERB.

THESE ARE THREE OF OUR FAVORITE SPOTS.

### Midnight Hole, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC/TN

Splash in the deep, emerald pool by a 6-foot waterfall after 1.4 miles on the Big Creek Trail. Boulders create both natural boundaries for this watering hole and the backdrop for a small waterfall. **Info** [nps.gov/grsm](http://nps.gov/grsm)

### Dunanda Falls, Yellowstone National Park, ID/WY/MT

The best end to a 9-mile hike? A 110°F soak with a view. Take advantage of Yellowstone's thermal activity and follow the Bechler River Trail to 150-foot Dunanda Falls, where soaker-made pools fill the river. **Info** [nps.gov/yell](http://nps.gov/yell)

### Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, Yosemite National Park, CA

There are so many gems here that they're not even named: Follow the Tuolumne River west from the valley (or east from Hetch Hetchy) and you'll pass a handful of pools ranging from bathtub- to swimming pool-size carved in the smooth granite and overlooking the High Sierra. **Info** [nps.gov/yose](http://nps.gov/yose)



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#NPS  
100

## FIRST DIBS ON DAWN

**Want to get a head start** on the rest of the country? Pack a Thermos and headlamp, and hike 2.2 miles (from North Ridge trailhead) for sunrise atop Cadillac Mountain in Acadia National Park. From October to March, this 1,530-foot peak (the tallest on the Eastern seaboard) catches the first rays in the entire U.S.

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#NPS  
100

### READER'S CHOICE

## THEY'RE THE BACKDROP TO THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN OUR LIVES

I got engaged watching the sunrise on Cadillac Mountain in Acadia and got married in Rocky Mountain National Park. *—Kris Hayse Holland*





the lower lake and play. The adults deemed it safe enough, with plenty of other hikers coming and going at the High Sierra Camp. (This was free-range parenting before anyone coined the term.) Prior to leaving, however, they did rule out one potential hazard: "Don't slide down that snowfield across the lake," my dad warned. And off they went.

I'm pretty sure we didn't immediately bolt for the snowfield. Memory is fuzzy on this point. But I do recall it was a perfect Sierra summer day: blue sky, no wind, warm sunshine. The kind of day made for a lingering patch of winter.

Sooner or later, like Yogi to a picnic basket, the five of us started rock-hopping along shore, making our way around the lake to reach the snowfield.

And it was even better up close. The patch of snow was nearly as big as a football field and blanketed a rocky slope that swept down to the lake's grass-rimmed edge. I couldn't imagine a more perfect slide. It was steep as a ski run at the top, perfectly smooth down the middle, and gradually leveled out at the bottom, so you could easily slow down before running out of snow.

We went up and down it, climbing straight up the center of the snowfield and schussing down on our butts. The snow was just right for sliding—a tad sun-soft so it didn't cause ice burns, but still firm enough so we could really get going. We whizzed down and climbed back up. Whizzed down and climbed back up. For kids, backpacking is about the destination, not the journey. We had arrived.

After an hour, the increasingly sun-softened snow took its toll on our legs. Slogging up the slope was getting harder and harder, but sliding down was getting no less fun. We looked up from the bottom and saw a potential workaround: The snowfield started out wide at the top and narrowed on the way down, tapering to the flat run-out we'd been using. If we hiked up the rocks on the edge of the snowfield and then traversed across to the middle, we could avoid the energy-sapping snow climb. I'd like to take credit for this brilliant idea, but I think it was a collective epiphany.

Ascending the rocks felt like riding an escalator compared to trudging up the snow. We hiked up the side, traversed to the middle, and zipped down the toboggan-like groove we'd established. What could go wrong?

On the umpteenth ascent, about halfway across the snowy traverse, 12-year-old Lisa slipped. She quickly picked up speed, rocketing down the perfect snow just as we'd done all morning. But this time she wasn't headed for the runout in the center of the snowfield. She was headed for the boulders that encroached along the side.

I waited for her to slow down or steer away, but the snow was too steep, too slick. As she gained momentum, I experienced the same feeling I'd had the night before, when the bear plodded inexorably toward me. It was a mixture of fear and awe, a paralyzing feeling: I was mesmerized by what I saw and afraid of what might come next.

What came next was all too predictable. Lisa slammed into the rocks. Fortunately, she'd managed to keep her feet downhill, so the damage wasn't as bad as it could have been. One broken foot.

A few hours later—after getting help from the staff at the High Sierra Camp and enduring a lecture from our returned parents—we were back in camp, talking about the trip's next adventure. Lisa, unable to walk, would ride out on a rescue horse. How cool was that?

Looking back, I realize that I probably didn't absorb the right lesson—or at least the expected one—from that Yosemite backpacking trip. But youth reduces cause and effect to very simple terms. What I learned was simply this: *Stuff happens* in national parks. And I wanted to visit more of them. Who knows what you might see—or do, or break, or remember for years to come? ■

Mt. Rainier



## MT. RAINIER

**No mountain in the Lower 48** has worked itself deeper into the collective consciousness than this towering mass, hanging over Seattle with an air of power and mystique. No doubt it's a beauty, decorated with tumbling glaciers the same way a classical sculpture wears her marble shawl. In late summer, the wildflowers push up around its base in seasonal homage, and in winter, the snow turns the whole massif into a solitary tooth fanging the horizon. To answer the siren song and climb it, well, is to explore the space between fear and awe. Go ahead, try to avoid dreaming about it tonight, try to convince yourself your life list is complete without it. That's Rainier's power. —Casey Lyons



## THE NEXT 100 YEARS

**Welcome to the end of waste.** We're used to thinking of Leave No Trace as a wilderness ethic, something that starts and ends at the trailhead. In this way, we protect our wildlands and keep them free from the lowest common denominator of consumerism: trash. But we're still dumping our garbage in the parking lot bins, and when we throw something away, what we're essentially saying is, "Your problem now!"

The result is predictable: Collectively, in 2013, the 7 million visitors to Yosemite, Grand Teton, and Denali National Parks left behind more than 16.6 million pounds of waste for the park service staff to deal with (never mind the garbage that the park's concessionaires manage, which is considerably more). Of that, 9.7 million pounds, including Christmas lights, mattresses, and lots and lots of random discards, went to landfills.

Now, the National Park Service, in cooperation with Subaru (zero-landfill at its Indiana plant since 2004), is asking a provocative question: Can we extend LNT to all areas of the park? This year, they're teaming up on a pilot project in Yosemite, Grand Teton, and Denali to try to divert all waste headed to the landfill.

They'll be working throughout the three parks and their gateway communities to study how stuff comes in and becomes trash and to figure out how to encourage visitors to leave less—or better yet, no—stuff behind. Nothing leaves no trace quite like nothing. *—Casey Lyons*



### THE GATE-KEEPERS

Rocky Mountain National Park's Beaver Meadows Entrance Station welcomes 4,000 vehicles per day on holiday weekends. That's a lot of friendliness and information. Here's how ranger Claire Geister, RMNP's supervisory visitor use assistant, does it.

**BACKPACKER** What does it take to keep your enthusiasm high? Are you naturally very outgoing?  
**Claire Geister** When you put on the ranger hat, it's like you're not yourself anymore. You lose your birth name and turn into Ranger. I'm an introverted, quiet person in my own life. When I come up to the entrance booth, it's this whole other character.

**BP** What's the weirdest question you've ever been asked?

**CG** I'm not sure this question was actually serious, but we do have people ask, "When do the deer turn into elk?" We joke with them and say, "After 10,000 feet of elevation they change." Or, "It happens in August."

**BP** What's the trick to the gig?

**CG** Keep a smile on your face. It's impossible to be grumpy with a smile on your face. Keep that sparkle going. You're their first ranger, even though they're your 1,000th customer.



### HUCKLEBERRY MILKSHAKES

**Yes, you should** graze on trailside huckleberries on late-summer trips to Glacier National Park. But if you missed berry season, you can still enjoy the local fruit in the best posthike beverage around: a shake, ubiquitous at diners on both sides of the park. Bonus: The blend of carbs, protein, and antioxidants makes it a legit recovery drink, too.



### THE AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL PASS

#### Rare is the year

I know for sure, in advance, that \$80 for unlimited park access will be a good investment. But with that card in my wallet, the parks' magnetism strengthens. Barriers dissolve, incentives change, road trips get on the calendar. I edge closer to the person I want to be, one who always says yes to adventure. So good deal or not, I buy the pass every year. I've yet to regret it.

*—Rachel Zurer*



# SPLASH

## SWIMMING. FISHING. ROCK SKIPPING.

DOING NOTHING BUT WATCHING MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS SHIMMER IN THE BREEZE.

*THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE A BACKCOUNTRY LAKE.*

HERE ARE 20 OF OUR FAVORITES, GUARANTEED TO MAKE WELCOME WAVES  
IN YOUR PERFECT SUMMER, NO MATTER WHERE YOU SPEND IT.

BY GRAHAM AVERILL

### THREE'S A CHARM

SUNBURST LAKE, CERULEAN  
LAKE & LAKE MAGOG

MT. ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK,  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

This one's a threefer: Trek 17 miles to Lake Magog (far left) via Assiniboine Pass or Wonder Pass, then visit Sunburst Lake (near left) and appropriately named Cerulean Lake (right) on a 1.4-mile spur. Camp beside Magog (first-come, first-serve). Photographer Callum Snape recommends breaking up the trek with a night at Marvel Lake near the midpoint. Contact [bit.do/MtAssiniboinePark](http://bit.do/MtAssiniboinePark)

PHOTO BY CALLUM SNAPE / IMAGEBRIEF



# HIDOWN







## HOOK, LINE, AND DINNER

### ROCK SLIDE LAKE

#### SAWTOOTH WILDERNESS, IDAHO

##### Distance

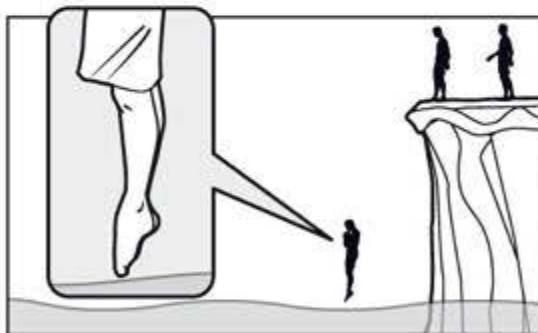
40 miles (loop with spur)

##### Time

5 days

If you're not already hooked on the electric feel of a wild trout taut on the line, you will be after the 32-mile Queens River Loop, which may as well be a pilgrimage through the land of the almighty cutthroat. The circuit skirts half a dozen lakes in Idaho's Sawtooth Wilderness, and Rock Slide Lake is the inner sanctum for both its healthy population of cuts and its sheer beauty. Jagged peaks frame the pool, so you'll have a lot to look at if the trout make you wait. To get there, tack on a 4-mile side trip from the north end of the Queens River Loop on Benedict Creek Trail (#462). "There's a primo camping spot on a peninsula on the southern side of the lake," says longtime Northwest Field Editor Michael Lanza. "Stand on the edge of it, and you can see cutthroat swimming in the clear water below your feet." Give yourself at least five days to knock out the entire loop.

**Trailhead** Queens River Campground (43.821010, -115.210084) **Season** June into October, but aim for late summer for warmest weather, fewest mosquitoes, and blooming high-country flowers. **Permits** Get a free, self-issued permit at the trailhead. **Contact** [fs.usda.gov/sawtooth](https://fs.usda.gov/sawtooth)



▲ Notice the debris from the rockslide that gave this lake its name on its southern shore (left in this image).

## GO ALL IN

CLIFF JUMPING IS EQUAL PARTS FEAR AND FUN, BUT SAFETY IS EVERYTHING. USE THESE TIPS TO PLUNGE PROPERLY.

(1) **NEVER LEAP ALONE.** Go with strong swimmers and don't pressure uncertain parties to jump: Nervous missteps are a leading cause of injury.

(2) **RECON.** Scout first, jump second. Landings should be clear of jutting rocks and swift currents. Water should be at least 15 feet deep.

(3) **FIND THE EXIT.** Make sure there's a way out.

(4) **NAIL THE ENTRY.** Forgo style points. Going in straight—feet first, arms crossed or at your sides—makes for a smoother landing. You can get away with a little flailing on lower leaps (like the jumper at right).





## EMERALD CITY

### STUART LAKE

#### ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS, WASHINGTON

Clear water ringed by green larches, and granite boulders worn smooth from glaciers, all under a horizon of toothy peaks—the Enchantments in Washington's Cascades are justifiably popular for scenes just like this. For an intro, trek 4.5 miles to Stuart Lake on the trail by the same name. Go for the day, or camp there with a permit (it's under the Core Zone's quota system). Contact [bit.do/AlpineLakesWild](https://bit.do/AlpineLakesWild)

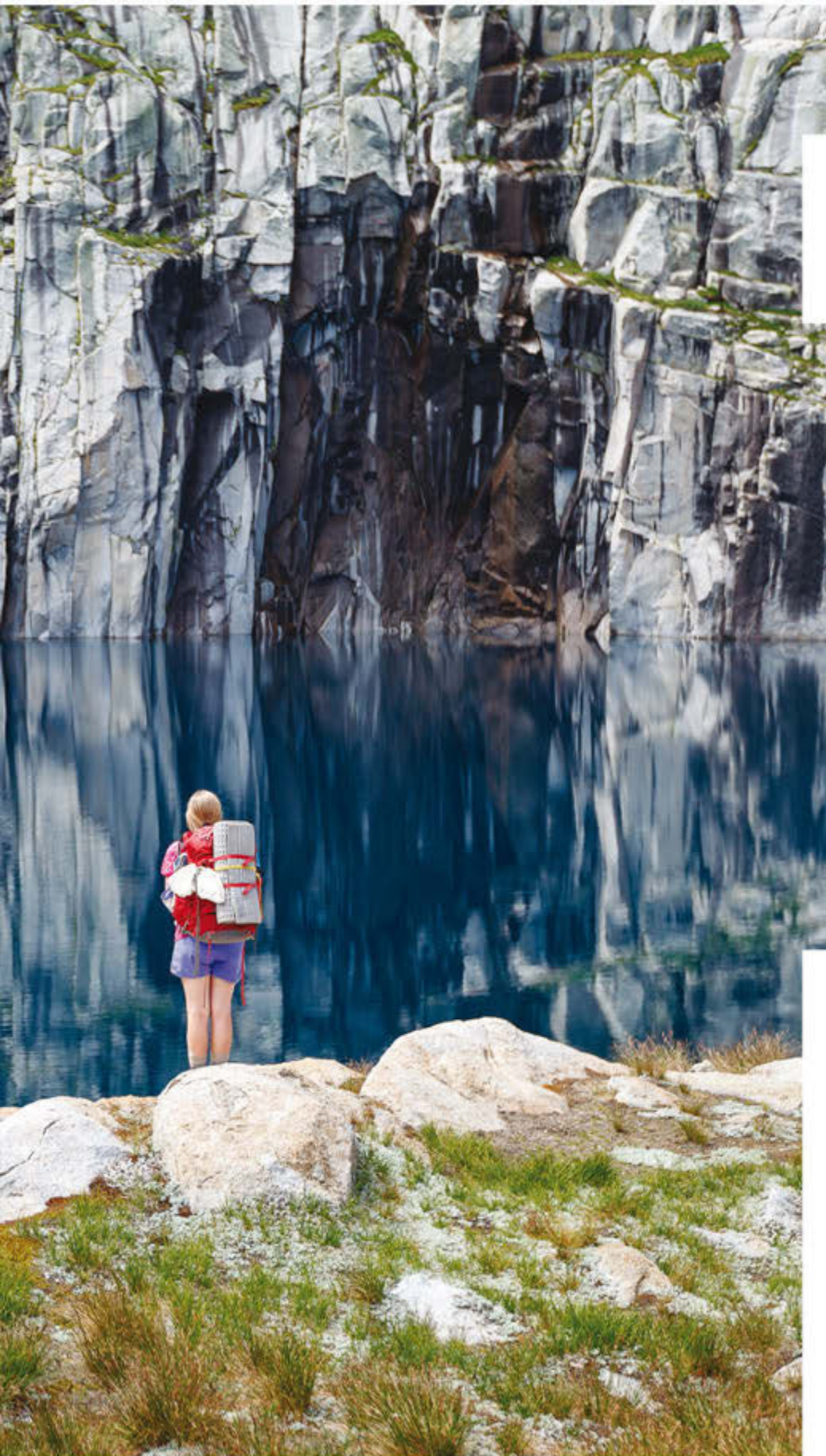


Nab this view of Precipice's namesake cliffs just off the High Sierra Trail on the north end of the lake.



PHOTO BY BERGREEN PHOTOGRAPHY





## TAKE THE PLUNGE

### PRECIPICE LAKE

#### SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA

##### Distance

39 miles out and back (or 75 miles point to point to Whitney Portal)

**Time** 5 days (or 8 to Whitney Portal)



Sure, Precipice Lake is a beauty—Ansel Adams agreed when he made it famous in his iconic photograph. But location counts a lot, too, and icy Precipice, which sits at 10,300 feet inside a bowl of sheer granite, couldn't be better situated: at the

end of a 19.5-mile trek through the hot and dusty Sierras. Ice can persist on the 44-acre pool's surface into summer, making it an ideal site for a cliff-jumping polar plunge (get safety tips on page 70). And, since it's so remote, you can expect it to be as pristine as it was when Adams was there in the 1930s. Take the High Sierra Trail 19.5 miles from Crescent Meadows, across miles of cliff-edge trail and through a natural tunnel. Smart itinerary: Divide the hike into two days, stopping in Bearpaw Meadow (mile 11.3) the first night, then searching for the perfect campsite along the cliffs above Precipice the second night. Dave Miller, owner of California Alpine Guides, says the best campsites face away from the lake. "Take a quick jaunt west off the High Sierra Trail, and you'll find campsites on bare granite with massive views of the Valhalla Cirque of granite domes below."

**Trailhead** Crescent Meadow (36.554884,

-118.749207) **Season** Late summer (after the snow has melted) through October **Permits** \$20 park entrance fee per vehicle, and you'll need a wilderness permit (\$15 per group).

**Contact** nps.gov/seki

## CAPTURE THE REFLECTION

PERFECT YOUR LAKE-SNAPPING TECHNIQUE WITH THESE POINTERS FROM PHOTO EDITOR GENNY FULLERTON.

(1) **TIME** Shoot in the early morning or around sunset for calm water and primo light.

(2) **LOCATION** Shoot by the water's edge. The lower you are, the farther the reflection will extend across the water.

(3) **EXPOSURE** Expose properly for the sky to capture the most color. Lighten areas that are too dark in a photo-editing program at home.

(4) **GEAR** Use a tripod to experiment with different heights and shutter speeds. Longer exposures smooth ripples in the lake's surface.

(5) **FILTERS** Use a polarizing filter to deepen color and minimize glare on the water's surface. Line up the tinted side of a graduated neutral density filter with bright skies to prevent overexposure.



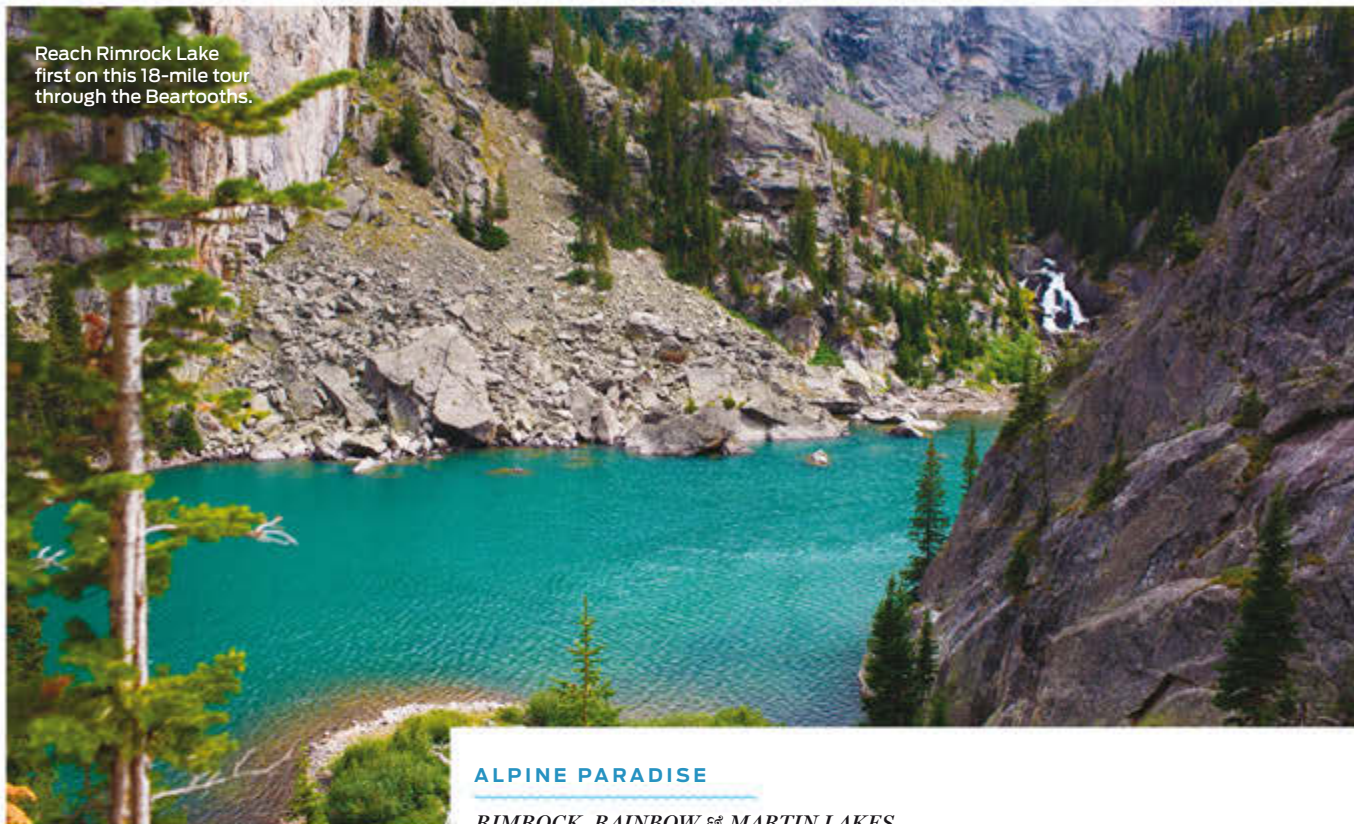
Paddle across Long Pond  
after the last carry of  
"The Nine Carries" route  
through the northern  
Adirondacks.



PHOTOS BY LINKED RING PHOTOGRAPHY (LEFT); KENTERPHOTOGRAPHY.COM.  
TEXT BY COREY BUHAY (SKIM THE SURFACE). ILLUSTRATION BY SUPERCORN



Reach Rimrock Lake first on this 18-mile tour through the Beartooths.



## ALPINE PARADISE

RIMROCK, RAINBOW & MARTIN LAKES

ABSAROKA-BEARTOOTH WILDERNESS, MONTANA

### PADDLER'S PICK

FISH & LONG PONDS

ST. REGIS CANOE AREA, NORTHERN ADIRONDACKS, NEW YORK

#### Distance

15 miles (loop)

#### Time

4 days



When your paddle slices through glassy water as the morning mist lifts from the surface, revealing a golden sky, you

know canoeing was the right choice—even if you had to carry the boat on your shoulders for 5 total miles. There's nothing easy about this pond-hopping route through the northern Adirondacks (known by locals as "The Nine Carries"), but during the 10 miles you're actually in your boat, you'll get myriad quiet lakes to yourself—as well as fishing opportunities and a soundtrack headlined by coyotes, crickets, and frogs. Start from the boat access on Little Clear Pond, heading counterclockwise. Spend day one at Fish Pond for, you guessed it, fishing (for brookies), then bed down in the east-facing (hello, sunrise) lean-to on the pond's north end. Day two, continue on to Long Pond, where you can cast a line for smallmouth bass from a sandy beach on the northeast end and camp on a peninsula nearby. Go-getters will knock the trip out in a few days, but Dave Cilley, owner of St. Regis Canoe Outfitters, says to give yourself four (spend an extra night at Long).

**Trailhead** Little Clear Pond (44.354158, -74.292002) **Season** June through October **Permits** Required (free) for trips longer than three nights **Boat rentals** St. Regis Canoe Outfitters (starting at \$49 per day; canoeoutfitters.com) **Contact** bit.do/StRegisCanoeArea

#### Distance

18 miles out

and back

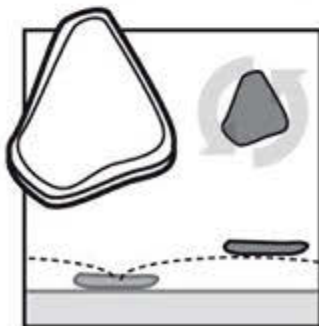
#### Time

3 to 4 days



If you're an angler, you'll find what you're looking for at Rimrock. If you're an angler and a photographer, look no further than turquoise Rainbow Lake a little ways on. If you're an angler, a photographer, and a peakbagger, you won't be disappointed with Martin Lake, the exclamation point at the end of this 9-mile route through the High Lakes Region of the Beartooths. Set up camp at the end of the line in a meadow beside sapphire Martin, which is hemmed in by 12,000-footers. Stay awhile and make this tarn your staging area for summit missions. Or, swim out to the island. Or, cast a line for brookies and cutthroat. Or do all three. Don't leave without bagging 12,083-foot Snowbank Mountain, though. "It's the best side trip," says Austin Hart, owner of Beartooth Mountain Guides. "It's a nontechnical, class 3 scramble over boulder fields to a plateau-like summit with incredible mountain views." To reach the lake trifecta, follow East Rosebud Trail for 7.5 miles to Rimrock, then another .5 to Rainbow. From there, hop on an unimproved path that climbs 600 feet over a mile to Martin.

**Trailhead** East Rosebud Lake Campground (45.199722, -109.63305) **Season** June through October **Permits** None **Contact** bit.do/CusterGallatin



### SKIM THE SURFACE

NEVER LET SOMEONE OUT-SKIP YOUR STONE AGAIN.

**Theory** The leading edge of the stone lifts, while the back edge drags (like a speedboat). The dragging edge scoops water in front of the front end, producing a wave that launches it airborne.

**Equipment** Flat, triangular stones are best. Try to find a rock a quarter-inch thick and as heavy as a billiard ball.

**Technique** Put your thumb on top, your index finger along the edge, and your other fingers curled underneath. It's all about wrist speed: Flick the stone parallel to the water's surface. The more spin, the farther your rock will go.



Pass Sandy Stream  
Pond en route to  
Wassataquoik Lakes.



## WILDLIFE & WATERFALLS

### WASSATAQUOIK & LITTLE WASSATAQUOIK LAKES BAXTER STATE PARK, MAINE

#### Distance

19.8 miles  
out and back

#### Time

3 days



Hemmed by the green peaks of the Wassataquoik and South Pogy Mountains and frequented by lumbering moose, this 178-acre lake and its little cousin couldn't be more *Maine*. Even better: You can explore their islands by boat without portaging (reserve a canoe before leaving, get a key, and pick it up at the backcountry rental outpost). Find the Wassataquoik duo tucked into the heart of 200,000-acre Baxter State Park, where they're accessible only by a

9.9-mile hike that passes a number of smaller ponds along the way. The lake's lean-to (sleeps four) allows for ultralight, tent-free loads, and from it you can explore mossy, multitiered Green Falls on an easy, .1-mile side trip. Back at the lake, have your camera ready to capture the nesting loon that has virtually taken over the island in the middle of Wassataquoik. Cast for arctic char, a fish species dating from the Ice Age, in the 75-foot-deep lake. And, of course, keep an eye out for mega-fauna. "It's easy to see moose in this part of the park," says Baxter naturalist Jean Hoekwater. "But seeing them at night is a thrill. At night, there's a good chance you'll see moose in the water."

**Trailhead** Roaring Brook Campground (45.919491, -68.858376) **Season** Mid-May to mid-October; fall is the best (when the moose are frisky and the leaves are changing). **Permits** Park entry is \$14 per car; campsites and lean-tos are \$20 per night (reserve up to four months in advance) **Boat rentals** \$8 per day from the park **Contact** baxterstateparkauthority.com

## MIND THE LNT

It's no surprise people like to camp close to lakes. Just don't make it *too* close. Fragile lake and shoreline ecosystems are vulnerable to human impact, plus lakeside campsites degrade the experience for others. Camp in impacted spots not less than 200 feet from the water's edge (ditto for washing and waste elimination). If going for a swim, rinse off bug dope and sunscreen first.

## ALPINE BASECAMPING

### LITTLE, MIDDLE & UPPER BLUE LAKES MT. SNEFFELS WILDERNESS, COLORADO

#### Distance

8.2 miles out and  
back

#### Time

2 to 3 days



Glacial tarns are a special subset of lakes—the surrounding peaks are sharper, the water is bluer, the air is thinner. Case in point: Upper Blue Lake. Seated below Colorado's 14,150-foot Mt.

Sneffels, the turquoise pool drains a glacial cirque in the San Juans. In summer, wildflowers bloom in the surrounding meadows, which you can camp in (find an established spot). To get there, take the Blue Lakes Trail (#201) 3.3 miles along Dallas Creek to Lower Blue Lake. Transition from spruce woods to talus as you trek another .8 mile to Upper Blue Lake at 11,720 feet. If stormy weather makes above-treeline camping iffy, find a protected spot on the north shore of Lower Blue Lake. At the Blue Lakes basin, the Sneffels summit is a must: Continue 2.4 miles on the Blue Lakes Trail to the pass by the same name, then take the class 3 ridgeline .8 mile to the summit. "You don't need climbing gear," says Brad Wallis, the Wilderness Trail Coordinator for the Ouray Trail Group, "but be careful of loose rock and exposure. Some sections require handholds." (Also: Start early to avoid afternoon thunderstorms.)

**Trailhead** Blue Lakes (38.035759, -107.806825)

**Season** Late June through mid-October (wildflowers bloom mid-July) **Permits** Grab a free, self-issued permit at the trailhead. **Contact** bit.do/MtSneffelsWild

PHOTOS BY IRWIN BARRETT / AGE FOTOSTOCK (LEFT); GRANT ORDELHEIDE



Choices, choices: On the way to Upper Blue Lake, camp a night in the meadows by Middle Blue Lake overlooking Lower Blue Lake (and Mt. Sneffels).







## **LAND OF 10,000 LAKES**

*ANYWHERE*

### **BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS, MINNESOTA**

You can't reduce this labyrinthine, 1.3-million-acre watery expanse to just one lake. While we guarantee you'll have a life-list trip if you visit Lac La Croix (pictured), you'll also create an unforgettable trip if you take the three-day, 38-mile route from Trail's End to Hunter Island. Get an itinerary perfect for you at [backpacker.com/boundarywaters](http://backpacker.com/boundarywaters). **Contact** [bwca.com](http://bwca.com)



12,223-foot Priord Peak (right) stands tall over its namesake lake.



## PICTURE PERFECT

### PRIORD LAKE

#### HIGH UINTAS WILDERNESS, UTAH

**Distance:**

20 miles out and back

**Time** 3 days

■ | ■

There's no such thing as a *bad* backcountry sunset, but when the soft light turns the rock an otherworldly shade of burnt sienna, that's the *best* kind. Hikers—especially those with a penchant for photography—will find that at 12-acre Priord, where a wall of sheer, striated peaks ring its milky-green water on one end, and the other end looks downcanyon to the High Uintas. If you're more interested in climbing mountains than snapping photos of them, then you'll have your work cut out for you, as most of the surrounding peaks—Priord, Lamotte, and Yard—are accessible only by faint sheep trails and off-trail scrambling. For the most adventurous side trip, Nick Woolley, founder of Backcountrypost.com, recommends the 4-mile boulder-hop to Allsop Lake. "It requires advanced nav skills, but the difficulty is part of the reward," he says. Take the rough, 10-mile Priord Trail to get to Priord. If the weather turns, find more sheltered sites at nearby Norice Lake, below treeline.

**Trailhead** East Fork Bear River Campground (40.864668, -110.771837) **Season** July to October (late summer for flora) **Permits** \$3 parking fee **Contact** bit.do/HighUintas

## BELOW THE SURFACE

EXPLORE THE WATERY DEPTHS WITH THIS BACKCOUNTRY-READY SNOREL KIT

### OCEANIC SHADOW

This mask packs flat (\$80; oceanic-worldwide.com).

### NAUTILUS TRAVEL

**SNORKEL** This snorkel rolls up to puck-size (\$40; aqualung.com).

### U.S. DIVER'S TREK

**TRAVEL FIN** With just a 5.5-inch blade, these will disappear in your pack (\$25; usdivers.com).

## SOLITUDE IN THE CASCADES

### BUCKSKIN LAKE

#### PASAYTEN WILDERNESS, WASHINGTON

**Distance**

21 miles out and back

**Time** 3 days

■ | ■

Most people on the Buckskin Trail will be headed to Silver Lake, a perfectly lovely (if rather popular) backcountry tarn. Sure, stop and snap a picture, but you're heading for the trail's namesake: a narrow, emerald specimen flanked on one side by grassy slopes peppered with evergreens and on the other by steep scree.

Foot-long cutthroats roam its waters, and you're likely to have it to yourself thanks to the grueling approach. Arrive at Silver Lake after a 5.5-mile hike through hills-are-alive meadows with long-range views that include shots of 10,781-foot Mt. Baker and the North Cascades. "Then, be ready for a steep climb and some routefinding, as the trail gets thin after Silver Pass (mile 8.4)," says Anna Roth, with the Washington Trails Association. "But the solitude you'll find at Buckskin Lake is worth it." Find the best campsite in the tall pines on the southeastern corner of the lake. It's wide and flat, with a big view of the lake and 7,850-foot Pasayten Peak and 8,096-foot Mt. Rolo to the south.

**Trailhead** Hart's Pass (48.720691, -120.670107) **Season** Late June through October; the wildflowers bloom in summer, but in fall, the larches turn gold and the hawks arrive. **Permits** National Recreation Forest Day Pass required (\$5/car per day; wta.org) along with a free, self-issued wilderness permit **Contact** bit.do/MethowValley

## MINIMALIST FLY FISHING

Tenkara, an ancient form of fly fishing, uses a fixed line and no reel—meaning there's less to carry into the backcountry.

**TRY THIS KIT** The simple, telescoping Iwana rod extends to 12 feet, but packs tiny (\$157; tenkarausa.com). Pair it with affordable, handwoven **Tapered Tenkara Line** (\$19) and **Amano Kebari Fly** (\$7.50), a do-it-all fly that works for most water and fish. See page 39 for more fly-fishing tips.



Reach this U-bend in Calderwood near mile 6, just short of the turnaround at Calderwood Dam.

## SMOKIES PADDLE TRIP

### CALDERWOOD LAKE

#### JOYCE KILMER-SLICKROCK WILDERNESS, TENNESSEE/NORTH CAROLINA

##### Distance

15 miles out and back

##### Time

2 to 3 days



Get a taste of the country's most-visited national park—without the crowds—at this “finger lake,” which pools in the southern Appalachians just outside the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

You could hike to Calderwood's deserted shores, but paddling there affords better opportunities to explore and set up a basecamp. Start by canoeing a mile from Magazine Branch Boat Ramp to the mouth of Slickrock Creek, where you'll find your ideal basecamp nestled beneath the green mountainsides. From here, the possibilities are endless. Either hike the Slickrock Creek Trail 1.5 miles into the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness to Wildcat Falls for cliff jumping, or hop back in your boat and paddle farther west on Calderwood (the lake is 7.5 miles long). Its banks are streaked with rock outcroppings, one of which houses an abandoned, half-submerged train tunnel. “You can paddle straight through,” says Jeff Wadley, a boater and hiker who grew up in the area. “It's like paddling through a cave.”

**Trailhead** Magazine Branch Campground (35.455643, -83.946571) **Season** Year-round **Boat rentals** Santeetlah Marina (\$125 per day or \$345 per week; santeetlahmarina.com) **Permits** None **Contact** bit.do/JoyceKilmer

## KNOW YOUR TROUT

WHETHER YOU'RE STALKING THEM OR JUST WATCHING THEM, HERE'S HOW TO TELL THEM APART.



**BROOK** Its fins and tail have white piping, and its upper fin has wormlike markings (squiggly lines).



**CUTTHROAT** Look for the telltale red or orange slashes under its jaw. Its spots become more prevalent toward its tail.



**RAINBOW** Red and pink streaks decorate its sides, and its belly is silver. Its spots are evenly distributed (unlike cutthroats').



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Deflated	31"x15"x9"	31"x16"x10"	31"x17"x11"
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Inflation	6 mins.	7 mins.	9 mins.
Max. Pressure	15 psi	15 psi	15 psi
<b>PRICES STARTING AT</b>	<b>\$949.</b>	<b>\$999.</b>	<b>\$1099.</b>





Put a too-big  
pot on a too-  
small stove and  
it'll probably  
fall over.

Home utensils  
are for home. Get  
some camping-  
specific ones.  
They're lighter.

Clean up as you  
go (or you'll  
lose stuff in the  
dark).

Getting up and  
down to retrieve  
more water or  
ingredients can  
lead to spills and  
hassle.

Don't dump out  
the contents of  
your bear canister  
or food bag—you'll  
lose things.

## THE UPGRADE CAMP KITCHEN

No matter how great a trail chef  
you are, if your kitchen is a sty,  
meal-time will be a drag. Do it up  
right, though, and you can turn  
any patch of ground into a five-  
star establishment.  
BY MAREN HORJUS  
PHOTOS BY BEN FULLERTON



**Better than the ground: your bear canister. Better than your bear canister: a chair conversion kit that turns your sleeping pad into a seat.**

**Pro tip: Don't waste time (or energy) pumping water; upgrade to a gravity filter and let water purify itself while you set up camp.**

If you're not counting grams, upgrade to a remote-invertible canister stove. When you add a windscreen, this type of stove is more stable and efficient than an ultralight canister stove and can be taken deeper into cold weather. Also, it works with Backpacker's Pantry Outback Oven (starting at \$50; [backpackerspantry.com](http://backpackerspantry.com)), so you can be a five-star pastry chef, too.

The best way to enjoy an upgraded kitchen? Upgraded fare, of course. Try dehydrated ingredients, like those from Harmony House ([harmonyhousefoods.com](http://harmonyhousefoods.com)). Kits start at \$50 and individual ingredients at \$3.

**Water vessel:** We like the collapsible Sea to Summit Kitchen Sink, which has handles and can't tip over (starting at \$20; [seatosummit.com](http://seatosummit.com)).

**Trade in sticky stainless steel pots for a set of nesting nonstick cookware.**

**Cooking to impress? Pack a folding ladle that doubles as a measuring cup. We like the MSR Alpine Spoon (\$6; [cascadedesigns.com/msr](http://cascadedesigns.com/msr)).**

**A durable, insulated mug will return your investment with years of hot bevvies. The best splurge? Snow Peak Titanium Double Wall Mug, which has lasted us more than five years (starting at \$50; [snowpeak.com](http://snowpeak.com)).**

**Game-changer: The GSI Spice Missile (\$10; [gsioutdoors.com](http://gsioutdoors.com)) contains interchangeable modules. Now garlic and chili powder are invited, too.**

#### 1. SELECT YOUR SITE.

You want a flat, fire-safe area (avoid brush). In bear country, go at least 200 feet downwind of your tent.

#### 2. SET UP.

If possible, set up near a large, flat rock. If not, haul one to your kitchen area and put it back when you're done. Think of it as your backcountry countertop—this is your

do-it-all space for food prep. Deadfall and bear canisters make good chairs if you didn't bring one. Arrange your kitchen equipment into a half moon around your seat so everything is within arm's reach (including a garbage bag).

#### 3. FETCH WATER.

Using a dromedary bag or folding bucket, collect all the water you'll

need for a meal at once. For one person, that's a gallon to cook dinner, clean dishes, and top up bottles. Add a couple of liters for each additional person.

#### 4. PREP.

Make sure all of your ingredients are at hand before starting. Next, prepare all ingredients (chop, slice, and measure) and set them

aside on or near your countertop so they're ready to go. Erect a windbreak around your stove (before lighting it). If you didn't bring one, jury-rig one out of packs, logs, boots, whatever.

#### 5. COOK.

Now the fun part. Refer to the tips above to ensure your camp kitchen continues to get good reviews.

#### 6. CLEAN.

Not the fun part. But since you cooked, make someone else do it.



**FIND RECIPES**  
to make in your deluxe camp kitchen at [backpacker.com/trailchef](http://backpacker.com/trailchef).

COMING NEXT  
**TENT FENG SHUI**



# JUNGLE GYM





ARE THE  
OUTDOORS  
THE KEY TO  
FUN WORKOUTS?  
OUR MAN TRIES  
A NEW FITNESS  
PHILOSOPHY.  
BY TED  
ALVAREZ



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW BYDLON





Lego men have one of the highest strength-to-weight ratios in the entire toy taxonomy.



# CALL ME JESUS CHRIST SUPERCRUNCH.

I'm running barefoot just outside of Olympic National Park's Hoh Rainforest, gripping a long stick behind my back with both hands and forcing my chest out. Besides being hard, it looks a little too much like a crucifix for my liking. There's even a spectator wearing a handmade leather tunic. He has roots tattooed on his bare feet.

"There's one thing I'm not seeing from you," he booms in a huge voice. He forks his fingers and pushes at the corners of his mouth to reveal a toothy grin beneath his foot-long ivory beard. "You should be smiiiiiling."

Easy for him to say. But then I see what he's seeing: a 5'10", 175-pound man, shirt soaked through with sweat, prancing about the woods twirling branches.

I can't help but smile at that. Mick Dodge, the Barefoot Sensei, National Geographic reality TV star, mountain man of Washington's Olympics, and today, my trainer, is right.

I'm relieved to be enjoying this, kind of. Because in the decade or so that I've cared about fitness, I've become the world's foremost expert on what I hate about working out. And it's not what you might think. I am not some sloth. I *enjoy* sweating, I *like* pain. But the gym itself? *Shudder*. The unspoken primate competition, the sickly fluorescent lighting, the constant funk of salty undies, and the grunting, so much grunting. The only thing gyms pump me up with is the desire to get the hell out of there and into the woods. On top of that, I have no

tolerance for monotony. Once the novelty goes out of a workout, it's a short trip back to my hazy-lazy seesaw between casual running, a few odd pushups, and, inevitably, nothing at all.

*Never mind*, I tell myself, *hiking keeps me in shape for hiking*. After all, it's gotten me up Rainier and across big routes all over the world. But in the last year (I'm 35), on a group climb up the Golden Horn in the North Cascades, my fitness plateau started to feel like a slanted pitch. At the summit, I panted like a black dog in summertime. Didn't this used to be easier? Was I going soft?

Then I knew it was time. If I can reach for best-shape-of-my-life outdoor performance now, maybe I can write it into my muscle fibers and preserve it until I can't put one foot in front of the other. I'm not looking for modest gains, or even simple gut erasure. I want to be a straight-up beast. I want panting, sweaty guides to fall three switchbacks behind. I want to explode my shirt Hulk Hogan-style, and when people ask me, "What's your secret?" I want to blow their minds when I casually answer, "*Backpacking*."

But, how? I know I can't commit to a gym routine without pulling the ripcord a few weeks in. I need something that will make the workouts an end unto themselves, not just a suffer-through to get the fitness I want. So, really, I'm looking for the perfect workout—something that'll sustain my mind as it punishes my body.

Which is why I'm in Mick's woods—or, as he calls the forest, Earthgym. It's packed with such exquisite exercise props as boulders, sticks, rushing rivers, and 200-foot-tall trees that shade the muddy trails leading from glacier to sea. *If this is the gym*, I think, *sign me up*.

# A

Ask anyone what pops into his head when he thinks "workout" and he'll probably say "gym." Traditional gyms are heavy on convenience, but for a lot of people, light on results—probably because our brains aren't built to derive satisfaction from such a place.

Science has my back on this one: Numerous studies published by the National Institute of Health and others







show adults who exercise outdoors go at it 30 minutes longer, on average, than those who work out inside. They also have an easier time staying committed to their routines (versus indoors, where half of new gym goers quit in less than a year). Plus, the mere act of moving outside relieves stress and lowers blood pressure, resting heart rate, and cortisol in the bloodstream.

"We evolved to be outside," says Joan Morrell, a neuroscientist at Rutgers University who studies the link between exercise habit and motivation. "For some of us [the gym] is already a somewhat aversive environment."

There are plenty of workout programs that take place outdoors, but I'm not so sure parking lots, athletic fields, or stadium stairs are what Morrell has in mind.

Turns out scientists aren't the only ones to notice the training boost from the great outdoors: Loose collectives like Dodge's Earthgym ([theearthgym.com](http://theearthgym.com)) and Dan Vinson's Wild Gym ([thewildgym.com](http://thewildgym.com)) preach a brand-new, CrossFit-by-way-of-wilderness workout method that blends long trail miles, ultralight hiking, and strength training using the surrounding ecosystem.

In between shooting his show, Dodge offers in-person instruction (\$150 and up) around the country in wilderness hot spots like Tahoe and the Olympics. He started 20 years ago, but now acolytes lead Earthgym classes where students take off their shoes and heft stones in places as civilized as New Jersey. Wild Gym mostly teaches corporate clients how to go primal for an hour a day (individual sessions start at \$25), but it's trying to crack the mainstream with its Monkii Bars—basically, twin batons that anyone can hang from trees or rocks to make outdoor body-weight exercises easier, more fun, and even more punishing (see review on page 92). Both offer free instructions on YouTube to get warriors like me started.

While they remain fringe groups for now, the growing popularity of similar programs like MovNat and an appetite for paleo-everything means I might not be the only one hauling logs at the trailhead before long.

Both outfits preach a fitness strategy that summons your inner *Australopithecus*, but they take markedly different approaches. Wild Gym prescribes a more traditional do-this-for-this-long strategy—which sounds a little regimented for my taste. As for Earthgym, well, Dodge isn't so concerned with metrics, duration, or what you might call measurable progress—which sounds a bit woo-woo. I decide to try them both, Wild Gym first.

If my plan works, it'll be a training strategy any backpacker would covet: lifelong fitness, powered by trail time.

# EARTHGYM PRACTICES

## Step out of your shoes.

Don't believe everything you see on TV: Not even Mick Dodge walks everywhere barefoot. Location selection is key: Soft sand or dirt trails are easier on feet than slabs or talus. Pick a trail or a wilderness area you know well. Alter your gait to land on your mid-foot (rather than your heel). Some ultra-minimalist footwear, like Luna Sandals or Vibram FiveFingers, preserve most barefoot motion while adding protection (though you will lose the key ability to toe grip). In colder weather, leg warmers help keep your bare feet warm.

## Carry a big stick.

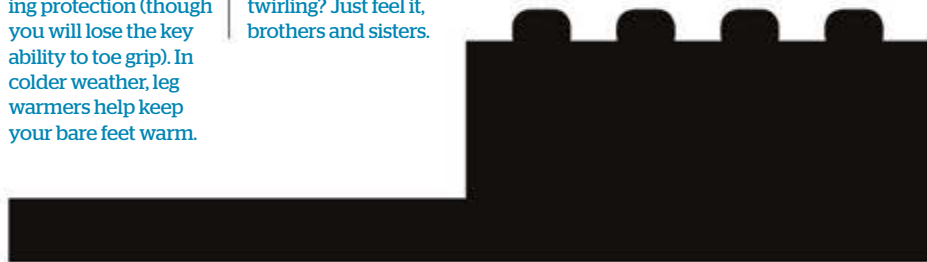
Find a wrist-thick, chest-tall walking stick—the straighter, the better. Uses are endless: as a stretching aid, as a brace for inventive yoga poses, as an impromptu pull-up bar, and, of course, as a balancing aid while hiking. Start by planting your stick into the soft ground, and lean as far back as you can in any direction to get a feel for stability. Then start messing around: Swordplay? Spear throwing? Baton-twirling? Just feel it, brothers and sisters.

## Rock on.

Stones offer weight challenges during barefoot training. Different-size rocks offer varied benefits. Grapefruit-size ones are good for curls and single-arm exercises; basketball-size ones work for two-handed presses and lifts. Smooth, round stones are harder to grip but offer the opportunity to strengthen hands and fingers.

## Go questing.

Dodge recommends getting creative and setting arbitrary goals: Point yourself north and see how far you can go; resolve to hike off-trail to an interesting spot on the map; run off-trail until you've seen every type of tree in a given ecosystem. Embrace your inner child while taking advantage of adult strength.



**Three days after Christmas,** I meet Wild Gym's Dan Vinson outside in Nederland, Colorado, a mountain enclave above Boulder. It's -4°F in town, but we're planning on climbing 1,600 feet higher into the snowy Indian Peaks Wilderness. With sunrise pinking the foothills and my coffee going lukewarm, I am less than psyched.

Not Vinson, who drives the Tarzan-in-trail-runners look home with a wild chestnut mane that billows around his face, and lats that spread his t-shirt like the wings of a manta ray. He beams, he

bellows, "Are you ready to get WILD?"

I've heard such overambitious enthusiasm at the gym before, usually right after a heavy stack of weights hits the floor and right before I start looking for the door. But Vinson's enthusiasm erases my misgivings—rather than riding the stoke of competition, he seems generally pumped on helping people tap into the endless font of fitness and self-esteem that surrounds them.

His origin story might explain that: After being cut from Georgetown University's lacrosse team his freshman year for being too soft, Vinson retreated to a backcountry ranger job in the Sierra. With nothing but miles of trail and the



rocks and trees around him, he transformed the mountains into a gym and made the team the next year. Since then, he's refined his wilderness training techniques—bodyweight exercises and interval training integrated into trail time—during five years as a wildland ranger in California and a firefighter in Montana.

I wonder if this stumble and redemption is what makes Vinson meet me at my level. On the drive to the trailhead, we trade favorite hikes and stories, and I realize Vinson is just like me, only built like Wolverine. Screw the whipping winds: I *am* ready to get wild.

Over the course of a single-day bootcamp designed to teach me the basics, Vinson introduces me to his methods: Do what you love, and add a layer of bodyweight, interval, and core training to supercharge your days. "Hiking and backpacking already create a baseline of long-term health and fitness," he says. "All you need to do is pour gasoline on the fire."

We clomp 6 miles into the Indian Peaks, breaking trail through 2 feet of fresh snow in spots. I'm in snowshoes, Vinson on skis. I congratulate myself for keeping up until we get to his favorite workout spot: a tall, gnarled ponderosa at the crest of a rocky pass. There's a gorgeous panorama of snow-swept peaks—better than any 24 Hour Fitness wall of mirrors—but it's also a nozzle for 40-mph winds roaring over the Continental Divide. Here's where we'll try out Vinson's Monkii Bars.

By now it's warmed up to 7°F, but the wind makes it feel like -17°. Time to get wild: lightning rounds of jumping pull-ups, squats, and hanging knee-to-chest raises—at over 10,000 feet—7 reps, 7 sets of each, no breaks.

I'm huffing but holding my own until my grip starts to weaken somewhere late in the fifth set. I fall to my knees a few times. Vinson barks encouragement over the wind ("Gas on the fire!"), and I finally finish in a forever-feeling 6:58. My chest is twitching in new and scary ways—it feels like I spent an hour doing bench presses. I could get used to this.

That's if I survive a Tabata run uphill in the snow, which Vinson prescribes for the second part of the day. Tabatas are short bursts of intense exercise—like intervals on PCP. Today, that's running full-tilt for 20 seconds, followed by 10 seconds of walking, followed by 20 seconds of maximum speed running—until I puke or collapse. Repeat eight times for a total of four minutes of punishment.

As soon as the timer beeps, Vinson is nipping at my heels, whipping me up the snowy slope and counting down in my ear.

By my third interval, I'm sucking wind; by the fifth I feel like I have a plastic bag over my head. I taste battery acid; not throwing up is a victory. After four minutes it feels like jellyfish are swimming through my leg veins. I start a dry cough that lasts for hours. "That's because the cilia in your lungs are dried out," Vinson says with an air of triumph.

I can barely move the next day, but the exhilaration sticks with me. Over the next few days, as the soreness fades, I'm left with two questions: Will I be able to do this if Vinson isn't personally driving me? And how am I supposed to integrate this deep-wilderness workout in a city, where I live?

But I got a good thwacking and an exercise routine that felt like something new. Time to sample Mick Dodge's heady goods.



**If you want to know** what it's like to be someone, walk a mile in his shoes. If you want to know what it's like to be Mick Dodge, take your shoes off and dance around like a wood nymph.

Sheets of rain pelt the cedar walls of Dodge's cabin, near Washington's Hoh Rainforest. I count no less than 12 dogs outside who stop playing in the mud to circle and greet me. Inside, antique rifles and knives decorate the walls.

Dodge's outdoor bonafides scare me a little: On our first phone call, he had to call me back because he was "warming up" from a swim in the ice-blue Sol Duc River. In November.

"I started hiding my weights in the Olympics; I'd run and go up for training sessions for three days," he says in a warm, storyteller's growl. "Then I started turning Earth into a gym. I got into a trance. I emptied my cup, remembered climbing back up into the trees. I began to relax my body, started accepting animals as my teachers: cougars, banana slugs; river otters move with tremendous fluidity through the water."

"Follow your feet and the Earth will teach," is Dodge's guiding principle. At his behest, I pulled off the road on my way here and asked Lake Crescent for permission to enter and learn. Under my breath, sure, but I did it. Hiking shoeless I'm even more skeptical of.

But Dodge is sure enough for the both of us. The former Marine and heavy equipment mechanic has been walking across his native Washington's rainforests his whole life, and doing it barefoot since 1981. He developed his idea for Earthgym while on barefoot walkabouts (some as long as four months) in the Olympics and Cascades over the last several years.

"I would camp out not too far from my job, and on the weekend I would pick a direction—say, 97 degrees—and I would jump fences, sneak through private property, and go until I couldn't go any farther," he says.

"You're restoring your feet with the land. We have a primal body memory in us that's millions of years old, and the less I have with me—walls, machines, electronics—the more I can stimulate that and get back into the land."

The rest of his primitive workout method has four simple tools: stick, stone, sack, and rope.

First, we gotta get out there.

My shoe-loving, city-soft feet are tentative at first, so I pad along soft dirt and sodden moss with a mid-foot strike and grip the ground with my toes. Pokey sticks and rocks send wiggles up my back and make me look more like a guy tentatively entering the ocean than the powerful Sasquatch of my imagination.

And then, slowly, I start to loosen up.

Going barefoot becomes less painful; the nerves in my toes send little pulses that make transitioning from soft moss to gravel or bare rock easier by slowing my stride or shifting my weight. During a weight-lifting session where we heft round granite stones, it gets real: When barefoot, I can feel my feet grip and my core tense to lift a rock overhead. Up to my knees in ferns, I can feel my muscles ripple from soles to fingertips while shafts of sunlight slice the mist between the firs. *This* is what I'm after.

The rest—twirling rope pullups, hanging upside down and spinning until my head pops, swinging a sack full of rocks like I'm trying to kill a troll—passes by in a blur of amorphous play. Climbing trees, running in the snow, pretending you're an otter? It's kind of a blast.

But of course it has the same problem as Wild Gym: How do I bring this kind of fitness-as-fun workout to the city, where 90 percent of my training takes place?

I ask Dodge about my dilemma. Though he presents as a mountain-man relic who sleeps in trees and eats grubs, he shares my goal of finding a way to make the mystical lessons of the Hoh thrive in the city. "The city is where squirrels train—but they're not diabetic," he says. "Start by getting away from walls



# GAS ON THE FIRE

**ALREADY HIKE AND BACKPACK REGULARLY?** Good news: You're halfway there. Integrating these high-intensity workouts from Wild Gym into your trail time will build muscle, jump-start fitness, and shatter plateaus. Get the full nine-week plan at [backpacker.com/monkii](http://backpacker.com/monkii).

Add the exercises below to a hike—or simply do them outside. Warm up with 5 minutes of jogging and three sets of eight of the following: squats, pushups, situps, back extensions, and lunges. For rows, V-outs, and flies (see right for definitions), you'll need a long piece of webbing or rope with loops at the end for grips (also good for harder hanging pull-up moves) or a lightweight gear assist (such as Monkii Bars).

## EASY

- A) 3 pull-ups
- B) 20 lunges
- C) 5 knees-to-chest

► For the first minute, complete 3 pull-ups and rest the remainder of the minute. For the second minute, complete 20 lunges and rest the remainder. For the third minute, complete 5 hanging knees-to-chest and rest the remainder of the minute. Repeat this process for 12 minutes total.

► Run 3 miles at moderate pace.

## MEDIUM

**PART A** Complete a 7-minute circuit of the following: 5 push-ups, 7 rows, 9 squats.

► Cycle through the exercises as many times as possible in 7 minutes. Rest for 3 minutes.

**PART B** Complete four sets of five V-outs with perfect form.

**PART C** Tabata hill sprints.  
► Find a hill and complete 8 rounds of the following: Run for 20 seconds at max pace; rest for 10 seconds. Repeat.

## HARD

**PART A** Five rounds of 7 push-ups and 20 Russian twists. Complete the rounds as fast as possible, making sure to fully lock out arms for each pushup rep.

**PART B** Focusing on form and not speed, complete four sets of six reps of flies and reverse flies. Quality of movement is paramount.

**PART C** Heavy Packout  
► Load up a multiday pack with 5 to 10 percent more weight than you'd carry on an average trip. Hike or run as far and as hard as you can in one hour. Bonus challenge: Try hiking at max pace for 35 minutes and attempt to return in 25 minutes.

## GLOSSARY

**V-outs** With webbing loops or Monkii Bars hanging at chest level, lean forward and push your arms out in a V shape, balancing on the balls of your feet. Keep your arms straight. Retract and repeat.

**Russian twists** Sit on the ground with hips bent at 90 degrees (your back should be at a 45-degree angle). Gripping a stone, weight, or short log, extend your arms out and rotate as far as you can left, and then as far as you can right, in one twisting motion. That's one rep.

**Rows** Grip webbing loops, or parallel branches at about chest height and lean back on your heels until arms are fully extended, keeping legs and back straight. With your shoulder blades tight and under control, pull yourself up.

**Flies** With Monkii Bars at knee height and shoulder-width apart, lean on them in pushup position. Slowly spread your arms wide, lowering your chest to even with the bars, and return.

**Reverse flies** With webbing straps at chin level, grip the loops and lean back so your arms are extended and your back and legs are straight and at an angle to the ground. Slowly spread your arms wide to lift your chest up to bar level. Return to starting position. That's one.



and machines. Take what you know from the indoor movement disciplines—yoga, gyms—and just take it [outside].”

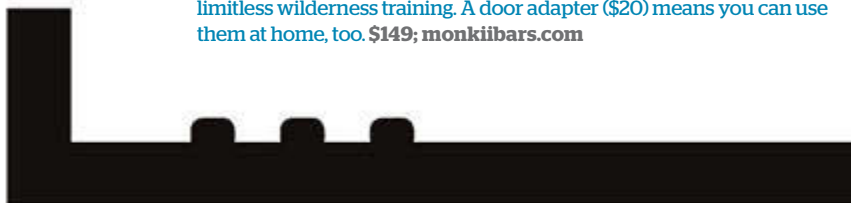
I can do that. I think.

**Reconciling the teachings** of my two coaches to the city, then, is my biggest challenge. What’s more, I’ll try it in Seattle’s dark and damp winter, when most trails are under feet of snow. But I think I’ve cracked the code.

Dodge’s push to “go questing” leads me to barefoot-run on sidewalks. When I get bruises, I switch to yards and medians, which makes me feel like a weirdo creeper when security floodlights expose me. But things improve when I stop trying to force it and look for a middle way: Sometimes I wear shoes, sometimes I don’t. I look for the places in between, cracks in the sidewalk where wildness sprouts in the city. I try to let whimsy inform my approach, and I start discovering things: gnarled trees perfect for pull-ups or climbing, hidden city park paths quiet as any mountain trail.

But I start noticing real changes when I incorporate Vinson’s detailed Wild Gym

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plans. Incremental progress becomes exponential as I increase the length of my interval sprints, the number of burpees, pull-ups, or V-outs I can do from the big-leafed maples that crown a punishing hill in a nearby city park. I'm jumping belt notches, and hidden obliques start to wink at me as the pounds drop off. Instead of dreading the workout, I get hooked: on fresh air charring my lungs to a crisp, the feel of dirt wedging into my nails, cold rain pouring on me while I'm burning inside, maxed out and panting.

And then I hit that most common of walls: life. Work hours, social obligations, and the attendant distractions pinch my workout time down to two days a week, then one. I'm getting pushed off the pillar I'd worked for. I need a fix—and fast—but I can't figure out what's wrong.

And then, I do. I'd gotten into exercising outside, but I've been missing the big dose of wilderness that's core to both teachers' methods. I can't get out into the deep wilderness every time I'm due for a workout. But then I realize: I'm a backpacker. I just need to take my workout with me on my next trek.

I pack my Monkii Bars on a big backpack-

ing trip and take my gym on the trail. It's here that I realize that enjoying the wilderness is the iron core of my ideal fitness routine. Whether I'm hefting stones by a glacial creek or doing rows under midday sun, the exercise is just the frisson that pushes me to the next level—the gas on the fire. Like Vinson says, being wild at heart is the key.

Now, back to being wild in the city.

This is when I finally stumble on athletic alchemy that lasts. Vinson's concrete goals give me something I can win, a finish line to point my muscles toward. Dodge's charmed third eyesight helps me spot the nature and wonder in my city, to chase crows and drop whatever doesn't make me smile.

The twinned approaches explode on the weekends, where overnights and dayhikes in my usual outdoor cathedrals become playground challenges. I take both the good vibes and the performance gains back with me to town, which helps me work through the drab sessions when I might otherwise want to take the day off.


And it's working.

One morning, on a run up Sentinel Mountain in Missoula, Montana, I keep pace with a pack of twenty-something runners in

Griz tees. As we reach a nest of switchbacks, I sprint past them and go off-trail, breaking through tangled firs until I find a meadow studded in flowers. Sunlight hits remnant snow on the rounded peaks beyond. In this quiet spot, I work my muscles until they quit, and ice them with the lingering chill in the air. I'm starting to love my new gym.

*Ted Alvarez, BACKPACKER'S Northwest Field Editor, is definitely not responsible for the uptick in Sasquatch sightings around his Washington haunts.*



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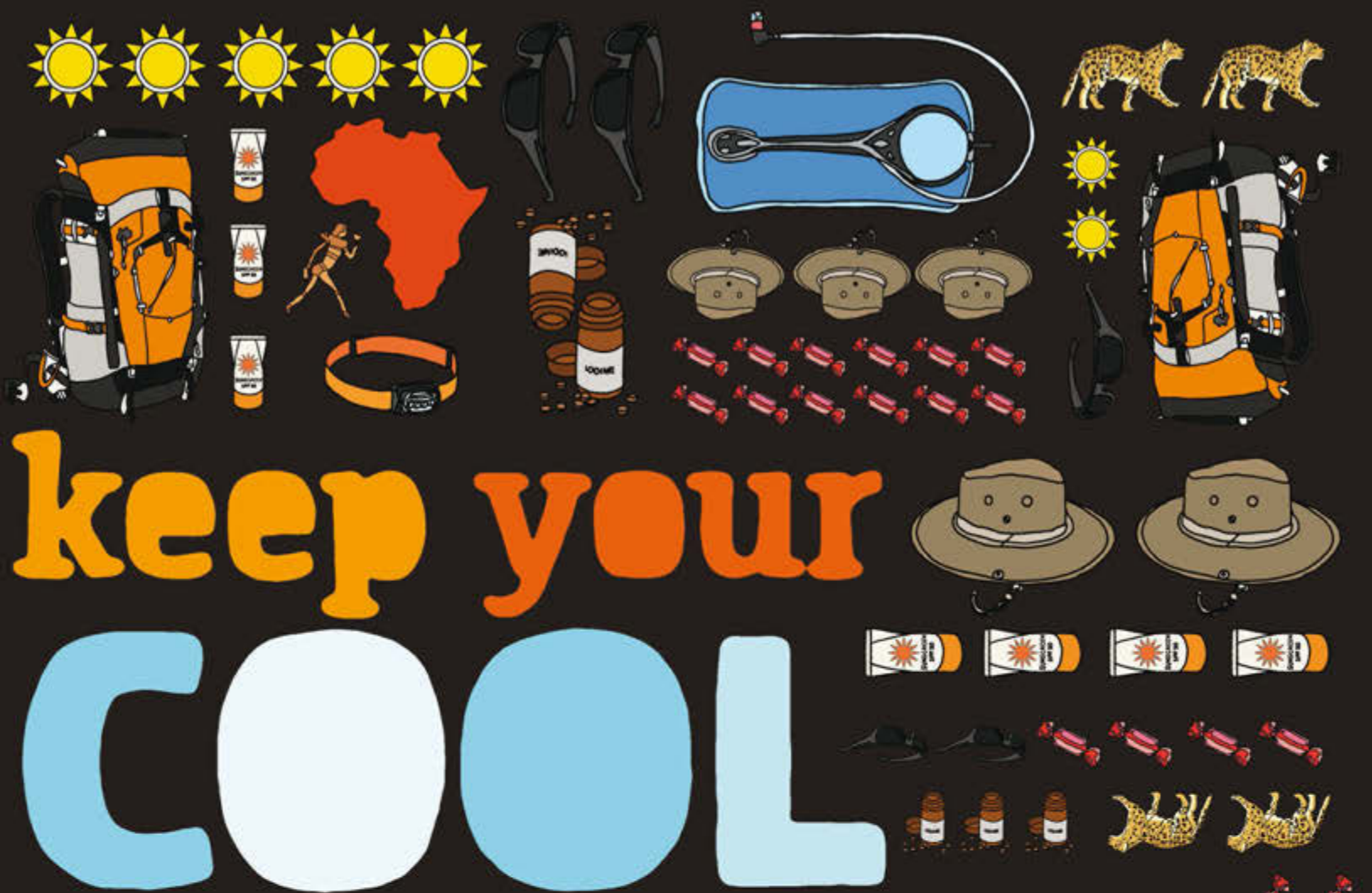
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lessons from one of the  
hottest places on earth

by Mark Jenkins

illustration by option-9



1. Have a backup plan for when the waterhole you are absolutely sure has water is actually dry.



2. Bring **hard candy** to suck on while hiking.

3. **Cotton retains moisture** better than synthetics, and thus keeps you cooler (though it can limit range of motion).

— 4 —

Wear a **full-brimmed hat** and extra-dark sunglasses at all times. Even with the hat, you can get burned by light reflected off the ground. Use sunscreen on any exposed flesh, like your face and the backs of your hands.

5. Don't hike during the middle of the day, **when temps reach their peak**. Crawl as far back beneath a boulder or inside a cave as you can. Read a book, take a nap. Bring airplane eyeshades.



**It was the heart of summer in the Namibian desert.**

There had been no rain on Brandberg Mountain for more than two years, so we each carried three gallons—24 pounds—of water. This sloshing liquid, combined with a week's worth of food and camping supplies, made our packs crushingly heavy. And still, this was only enough water for two days.

I hiked with my Ovambu guides in the predawn dark for an hour before the sun broke the horizon. Then the temperature began to rise by the minute. Before 9 a.m. it was more than 100°F in the shade, if you could find it. The Brandberg is all rock, a vast cauldron of exfoliating granite with a few cactus-like trees. We hiked for a half hour, then hid beneath a boulder for a half hour. This would become our standard routine. By noon it was 115°F in the shade. In the sun, the rocks were too hot to touch, like the top of a wood stove. It was so hot the soles of my boots delaminated and I had to use large safety pins run up through the rubber to secure them.



11

Use a bladder with mouthpiece rather than a bottle. You'll drink more. Always bring a backup water bag. (Learn how to patch a leaky reservoir at [backpacker.com/reservoirfix](http://backpacker.com/reservoirfix).)

12. If you're working hard in extreme heat, **drink 5 quarts of water a day**. Add a pinch of electrolyte mix to each quart (go easy on sweeteners; too much sugar in the heat will make you sick).

13. Plan your route to take advantage of terrain—shelves, ridges, ledges—and the arc of the sun so you can **hike in the shade as much as possible**.

14. You need a pack with very good suspension to carry

20

to

30

pounds of water plus gear.



15. Hike at night. LED headlamps last for dozens of hours. (In Namibia, I hiked very little at night because of the leopards, which were thirsty and hungry, and because the point of the trip was to view rock art.)

16. Excessive heat, like excessive altitude, kills your appetite. **Force yourself to eat.**



## 6. RELY ON YOURSELF,

not your guides or companions, to ensure you will have water. I brought both the filter and the iodine. Without them, the nasty muck we found probably would have made us violently sick.

7. **Don't wear shorts or short sleeves.** When the ambient temperature is above your body temp, 98.6°F, more layers actually keep your body cooler. That's why you see Bedouins and other desert dwellers wrapped up.

8

Take off your boots and socks at every stop. This will keep your feet from baking and blistering. Change salty socks frequently.

9

Know with certainty—absolute certainty—where **your next source of water** is and how long it will take to get there in severe conditions.

10. In **desperation**, peeing your pants is an effective method for cooling off.

By 3 p.m., we had climbed 5,000 feet to the rim of the plateau and already drunk half our water. The top of the Brandberg is a Mars-like landscape of rolling red stone and random boulders. There is no vegetation other than spiky, spiny, bizarre plants that sprout from creases in the rock (and apparently only need water once a century).

We needed water immediately. If we didn't find any, we'd be forced to turn around the next morning. We searched barren stone pool after stone pool, crossing swales of smooth granite, finally finding 6 inches of green sludge at the bottom of an 8-foot-deep stone hole. This was water

leftover from the last rains more than 24 months earlier. We were ecstatic and camped right there.

For a week we explored the famous rock paintings of the Brandberg, some almost 4,000 years old, all depicting a time when the land was lush and giraffes, lions, eland, and elephants flourished. Each day the temps rose above 110°F and still we hiked for hours upon hours. One morning we climbed 9,030-foot Königstein, German for "king's stone," Namibia's highest peak, hoping for a break in the heat, but it didn't happen. My guides, a father and son team, Angula and Thomas, showed me red rock

paintings that had only been seen by a few other people in the millennia since they were created.

Every evening we returned to our camp and went to the one source of water in hundreds of square miles. Using string and a cup, we pulled up water and filtered it. But the water was so scummy, the filter clogged permanently after several days and we were forced to use iodine instead. Still, it was water, the liquid of life, and we were thankful.

There are hotter places in the world, but I hope I never have the opportunity to visit them. Here are the lessons I learned from hiking in the heat of the Namibian desert.



17. In **open country**, hike from shade to shade; half hour moving, half hour resting beneath a cactus, a bush, a boulder.

—18—

**Don't wear gaiters, they make your feet sweat too much.**

19. Know the symptoms of **heat exhaustion** and **heatstroke**. Heat exhaustion you can recover from; heatstroke, in a wilderness desert, could quickly be fatal. Check each other at every rest stop for signs and symptoms (see right).

## Early Warning System

Pay attention to these symptoms and prevent a dangerous case of heat illness.

### Heat exhaustion

Go on high alert if you see these symptoms in yourself or others. Early treatment can prevent heatstroke, which can be fatal.

- Headache
- Dizziness and light-headedness
- Weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pale skin
- Profuse sweating
- Dark urine
- Increased heart rate

### Heatstroke

This occurs when your body is no longer able to regulate its temperature. Heatstroke can cause shock, brain damage, organ failure, and death.

- Fever (temperature above 104°F)
- Irrational behavior
- Extreme confusion
- Hot, red skin
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness

### Treatment

1. With both heat exhaustion and heatstroke, your goal is to cool the victim as quickly as possible. Remove non-cotton clothing and have him lie down in the coolest place available. 2. Apply cool water or wet cloths to the person's skin. Fan him and place cold compresses or ice on his neck, groin, and armpits. 3. If the victim is alert and not vomiting, give him a sports drink or salted water (1 teaspoon per quart). He can drink about a cup every 15 minutes. 4. Seek medical attention immediately if you suspect heatstroke. Note: Victims can relapse after appearing to recover.



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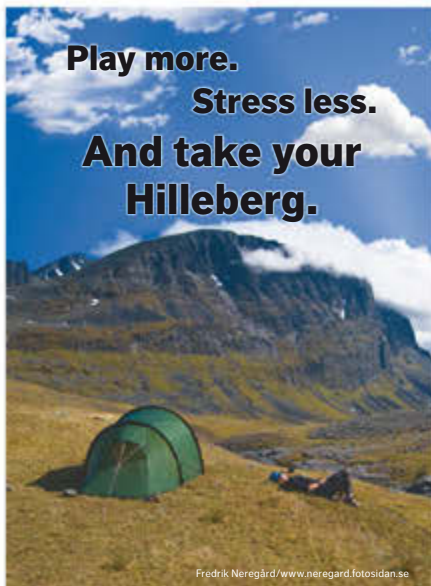
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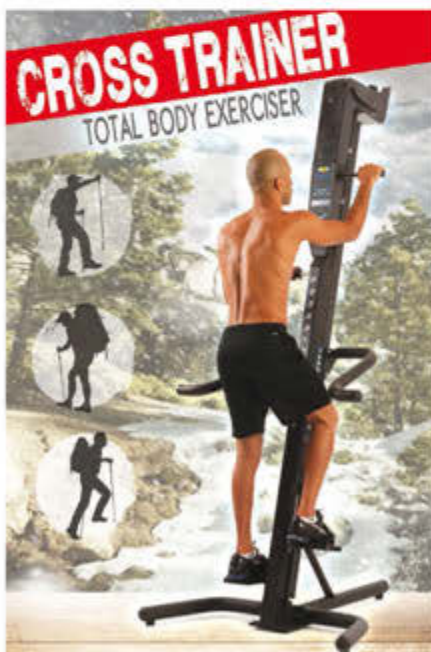


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# Lower Robin Lake Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Washington

Stake your tent overlooking Lower Robin Lake, a glacier-carved basin cradling pure snowmelt. This area rivals Washington's Enchantments—but without the permit lottery.

14,420-foot  
**Mt. Rainier**  
(the distant,  
hazy one)

4,921-foot  
**Cathedral Rock**

7,960-foot  
**Mt. Daniels**

## Front-porch views not enough?

Arrive early to secure a spot between the two Robin Lakes, and even your back porch can be waterfront. There's room for three tents, but if taken, find another established site 200 feet from water. The lower lake is the more picturesque of the two, so try the shelf overlooking its northern shore. Fires not permitted.

**Elevation**  
6,300 feet  
**Size**  
5.8 acres

**Upper Robin Lake**  
(200 feet north from here) is the larger of the two at 30.6 acres.

## Get here

From the end of Forest Road 4330, take the Deception Pass Trail 4.1 miles northwest through the forested valley to a fork, then prepare for a leg-burner: After you pick up the Robin Lakes Trail, you'll climb 2,900 feet over 3.7 switchbackless miles to reach the twin Robin Lakes.

**Season** June through September **Permits** Self-issue a free permit at the trailhead.

**Contact** [bit.do/RobinLakes](http://bit.do/RobinLakes)

## To-Do List

- **Dayhike** Circumnavigate Lower Robin on a 2.5-mile loop.
- **Harvest mushrooms** Find edible morels in damp areas of recovering forest (free; no permit needed).
- **Bag a peak** Summit 6,630-foot Trico Mountain or 7,144-foot Granite Mountain on mile-long, class 2 hikes up the ridge.
- **Soak** Explore Tuck's Pot and the Granite Potholes, smaller alpine ponds cupped in stone with rocks perfect for jumping off or just dangling your feet from. Find Tuck's Pot just off the Robin Lakes Trail across from Tuck Lake and the Granite Potholes on the way to Mt. Trico.
- **Spot a mountain goat** Look for them grazing around the rim of the lake.
- **Fish** Cast a line (license required) for elusive cutthroats.





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